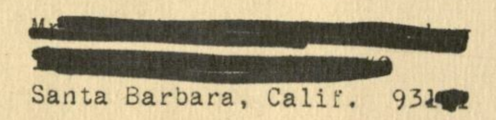
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Montecito Movies

IN THE DAYS OF THE *FLYING A*

The Reminiscences of Mr. & Mrs. Roy Overbaugh

On March 17, 1954, W. Edwin Gledhill, at that time curator of the Historical Society Museum, recorded on tape the recollections of Roy Overbaugh and his wife Marjorie. Overbaugh was one of the outstanding cameramen of the era of silent movies, coming to Santa Barbara in 1912 with the American Film Company. First in La Mesa and then in Santa Barbara, he photographed most of the American Film Company's productions between 1910 and 1913. Mrs. Overbaugh also figured in the movie making of those days and shares in these recollections.

In regard to the people mentioned, the reader will of course keep in mind the passage of time since these reminiscences were recorded.—Editor.

Mr. Overbaugh: I am quite sure that it will be news to most of the residents of this city that Santa Barbara was for a number of years the home and production headquarters of one of the leading motion picture companies of this country, and this fact played no small part in acquainting the public of the United States and also abroad with the many desirable and charming features of our beautiful city. The company that I am referring to was the American Film Company, popularly known as the "Flying A." It rather surprises me that this really important event in the history of Santa Barbara has been seemingly lost sight of. In conversation I never hear it mentioned, nor do I ever come across any reference to it in public print,[1] so I am genuinely glad that Mr. and Mrs. Gledhill have asked me to record some reminiscences of that period. I believe that some account of this event definitely belongs in the history of Santa Barbara. Well, how to begin. I think perhaps I should start with the American Film Company prior to its arrival here. It was organized in Chicago where the head office and processing plant were located. In 1910 they sent their first production unit to the Coast, and I was in charge of photography. We located in La Mesa, a few miles outside of San Diego. I might say here that at this early date artificial light had not been developed to the point where it was suitable for proper lighting. Consequently, all scenes were photographed by daylight. This meant that scripts and scenarios had to be written so that no interior scenes were necessary. Later on, outside stages were devised consisting of a crude platform with an overhead covering of diffusing cloth such as nainsook. This made interior sets possible, but even then they were seldom used unless there was no alternative and daylight was still the necessary source of light. This, of

1. This situation had improved by the late 1950's: see the *Santa Barbara News-Press* for August 10, 1958, and Walker Tompkins' "Santa Barbara Yesterdays" column in the *News-Press* for December 29, 1968.

course, plus certain scenic advantages, was the principle reason why the early motion picture companies chose California. It was a matter of business: they had to locate where they could depend upon the greatest number of sunny days. Well, to continue, after working out of La Mesa for about two years and photographing exterior scenes exclusively, we practically ran out of settings. We had photographed nearly all the worthwhile scenery within a reasonable working radius. It was then determined to pull up stakes and move elsewhere. Scouts and location men were sent out to look over and thoroughly investigate all other possible locations in California. The result of this exhaustive search was the selection of Santa Barbara as the best possible base of operations, considering climate, sunshine and variety of scenery. The decision was made and the entire company arrived here on July 6, 1912. This original company consisted of the following: the leading man was J. Warren Kerrigan, the Clark Gable of that period. He was the most prominent motion picture star of those days, the national heart throb. That was the time when Mary Pickford, known as America's Sweetheart, was becoming famous. The leading lady was Pauline Bush. The ingenue was Jessalyn Van Trump and a most convincing villain was Jack Richardson. Character parts were played by George Periolat and Louise Lester, later known as "Calamity Anne." The script writer was Roger Armstrong. The business executive was Wallace Kerrigan, brother of the leading man. The director was Allan Dwan, former Notre Dame football star, who incidentally is still successfully directing feature films in Hollywood. We made mostly westerns, and our stock man in charge of horses was Charles Morrison. His brother Pete was the company chauffeur. The president of the company, who came west to negotiate and conclude any business arrangements, was S. S. Hutchinson. I was the cameraman. This position is now known as Director of Photography. My particular function was to photograph the motion pictures and also to make still photographs. It was sort of a one-man department. Nowadays seven men are employed to do the same work, although I must admit it is somewhat more complicated. Although we had arrived, we had not as yet any business address, so the first thing was to find suitable quarters. Eventually the company planned to build, but pending the selection of a site and the erection of a suitable structure, we had to have temporary accommodations. On the east side of upper State Street, near Pedregosa, there was an ostrich farm which we learned was available. It seemed to meet our requirements, so a lease was signed and we moved in. A few days later we made our first picture. Our schedule called for two completed productions each week. I should say that the pictures of that period were not the multiple-reel product of today. They were one reel only, consisting of a thousand feet. In passing, I might add that the cameras of those early days of silent pictures were rather crude compared with the modern ones. They were not motorized and had to be cranked by hand—exactly one



Interiors were shot by daylight

foot, or sixteen frames, per second, which took two full turns of the crank. However, through continual practice one became quite expert and automatically acquired the correct rhythm and timing so that is was no trick at all to crank, for instance, one hundred feet in one hundred seconds quite accurately. . . .

Now about those one-reel pictures. As I have said, our schedule was two a week. As they were completed we would send them to Chicago for processing and eventually we would get back the developed negative. We would then project this negative, edit it, make any necessary retakes, and again send it to Chicago. Finally, we would receive a completed print and then the picture was ready for national distribution. Through working together as a unit for a couple of years we had become so proficient that it took us only half a day to do a picture. If we hadn't completed it in time for a late lunch, we considered ourselves slow. This meant that we had at least four days free time each week, and then was when we all fell in love with Santa Barbara and began to appreciate the pleasures it offered. If we wanted a full week off, as we quite often did, we would work four and one half days during one week and make four pictures instead of the required two. "Life can be beautiful" is a familiar phrase. Well, it certainly was. Most of our time was spent at the beach. Working was just a sideline, and even that was fun. We got paid for it, too, which in retrospect sometimes astonishes me, considering the enjoyment we had.

After we had been here a few months and were still at the old ostrich farm, it was decided that time would be saved and results better if we could arrange to do our developing here instead of sending the negatives to Chicago. A vacant building on Cota Street near State was rented. Developing, fixing and washing tanks, drying drums and other necessary equipment was installed and we started developing our exposed film immediately. This was quite an advantage, as, instead of waiting a week or two to get our film back from the east, we knew definitely within twenty-four hours what results we were getting, and whether or not any scenes had to be remade. This developing task was assigned to me.

The pictures we made were quite good and well received by the public. The company was successful and made a great deal of money, and decided that the time had come to build their own permanent studio. A site was selected on West Mission Street, extending northward and comprising the entire block between State and Chapala Streets. The plans called for an administration building, a glassed-in and curtained studio for interior scenes, dressing rooms and a green room lounge for the actors and actresses, paint, carpenter and machine shops, property rooms, art department, garage, stables and corrals for the horses, camera equipment and loading rooms, a complete laboratory for processing, together with cutting, editing and projection rooms. The grounds were beautifully landscaped and the buildings artistically arranged around a central garden and driveway. Surrounding the entire property was a high Mission wall, with the entrance on Mission Street through huge ornamental iron gates. Remnants of these structures still remain, principally the building on the corner of Mission and Chapala, which was originally the actors' green room lounge and dressing rooms.

When this work was finally completed, Santa Barbara was, without any question, the home of the best equipped and most artistic motion picture studio in the country. We then abandoned the ostrich farm, and with a considerable feeling of pride, moved into our permanent quarters and a new era was inaugurated. The company was now organized to produce on a much larger scale, and expansion was in order. The market was expanding, so it was decided to add several more producing units to the original one. This made necessary a considerable increase in our personnel, so a number of actors and actresses who were becoming popular were induced to come to Santa Barbara and join the "Flying A." Also, more directors, cameramen and technicians were added. A few more company automobiles were purchased, principally Wintons, one of the best makes at that time. Bell and Howell had just brought out a new 35 millimeter motion picture camera which was a great advance over anything previously used, and we acquired several of these. From here on, events, changes and developments occurred rapidly. To relate the detailed history of all this would require much more

time and hundreds of feet of tape, so I think it might be better to bring this chapter to a close. As a matter of fact, I need a little break to collect my thoughts and decide what further incidents might be pertinent to this account. However, before concluding I think it might be in order to mention the names of some of the new stars and personnel acquired by the company during this period of expansion. Some became quite famous and are still remembered. A few are still active.

Among the actors were Wallace Reid, Harold Lockwood, William Garwood, Marshall Neilan, Sydney Ayres, Eugene Pallette, William Russell, William Stowell, Edward Coxen, George Field, Harry Von Meter, and also Richard Bennett, the father of Constance, Barbara and Joan Bennett, who then lived here in the old Dibblee mansion on what is now known as Leadbetter Hill. Also at that time a young actor by the name of William Frawley joined us. At the present time he may be seen as Fred Mertz in the "I Love Lucy" show on television.

Some of the actresses who became members of the company were Margarita Fischer, May Allison, Lottie Pickford [Mary's sister] Mary Miles Minter, Ruth Donnelly, Juanita Hansen, Eugenie Forde, Winnifred Greenwood, Vivian Rich and Charlotte Burton, a well-known Santa Barbara girl. In my opinion, that is quite an imposing array of talent, especially for those days. This list would not be complete without mentioning the names of new directors and cameramen who joined us. Directors were Lorimer Johnston, Thomas Ricketts, Albert Hale, Al Santell, Reeves Eason, Harry Pollard, Jacques Jaccard, Henry Otto, Frank Borzage and Henry King, who is now with 20th Century Fox. Cameramen were Al Heimerl, Robert Phelan, Guy Wilkie, John Webster Brown, John Sykes, Faxon Dean and Thomas Middleton, a local photographer, and others. If I have omitted any names that should have been included in this list, it is entirely due to the lapse of time—about forty years—which sometimes plays tricks with one's memory. . . .

When we moved in we had rather ambitious plans. Instead of one-reelers, we now made two-reelers and even some four-reelers. Lights were now sufficiently improved so that we used them occasionally for interior sets. Actually, we used a mixture of diffused daylight, mercury vapor tubes and carbon arcs, which were then known as Kleig lights. In those days the making of a picture was more of a novelty than it is now, and wherever we went to shoot scenes we usually had quite an audience. The people of Santa Barbara were very much interested and very hospitable. Most of the better homes, grounds and estates were thrown open to us to use as locations, as were the grounds of the Potter and Arlington Hotels, and we certainly took advantage of all this. Some of our favorite locations were the home of Mrs. William Miller Graham in Montecito; the Gillespie estate, also in Montecito; beautiful Glendessary in its picturesque setting on Glendessary Lane, now

owned by Mr. and Mrs. Gledhill (we made many scenes there); and of course the Mission. Many scenes were made there also. At times, when we wanted something a little more wild and rugged, we went up to La Cumbre and of course to the beach when Castle Rock was still there. We used that location a great many times. Mission Creek, which had, I believe, more water in it than at present, was used occasionally. Scenes were also made in Hope Ranch. Quite frequently we went to Santa Cruz Island, and while there we usually stayed for a week or two of camping. As I remember it, I think we went on a boat which was owned by Captain Vasquez, and I think the name of the boat was the *Otter*, so we rather enjoyed those outings too. Also we made many location scenes in Summerland, Carpinteria and Goleta.

At this time we made so many pictures and we couldn't always get people down here from Los Angeles and other cities, so they decided to form sort of a stock company, and besides the more well-known stars which I have mentioned, quite a few of the local people took part and joined the stock company and were used in various pictures and various performances. My wife, who is sitting with me, who was Marjorie Greenwell, a native of Santa Barbara, was quite an expert swimmer in those days, and she, besides doing some dramatic work, was frequently called upon to "double" when the script called for a swimming scene, and perhaps the star couldn't swim.

Mrs. Overbaugh: That was great fun. I enjoyed that, because I loved swimming better than anything.

Mr. Overbaugh: I know you did. Didn't you do rather a risky stunt over on Santa Cruz Island one time?

Mrs. Overbaugh: No, I didn't actually do it, but what the director wanted me to do was to swim into Painted Cave, as the waves, the swells went down and made an opening, and then swim out again when the waves went down, but it was entirely too risky, and Captain Vasquez said it would be suicide to attempt it, but you can see that even in those days the directors, looking for realism, were asking you to do the impossible almost. But I did do a lot of swimming there.

Mr. Overbaugh: I remember one where Ed Coxen, who was playing the lead, according to the script he was supposed to be drowning and you were supposed to . . .

Mrs. Overbaugh: Oh, no, no, you've got it wrong. I was supposed to be drowning and Ed Coxen, the star, was supposed to rescue me. But when he dived in from the end of the platform on the wharf, it seems he had on a crocheted or knitted tie of some kind that, the minute it got in the water, it contracted, and he was choking and gasping and pulling at his tie, so I had to come out of my drowning scene and rescue him.

Mr. Overbaugh: I do remember that that was . . .

Mrs. Overbaugh: He was actually being strangled by this tie. The cameras were still going. It was very funny, because I suddenly came to life and swam to him and rescued him.

Mr. Overbaugh: So that's what they called a switch. The script was reversed at that point.

Mrs. Overbaugh: So we took it over again, without the tie.

Mr. Overbaugh: Let me see. Oh, Victor Fleming occurs to me here. Now Victor Fleming was a local boy who was an expert mechanic, especially anything to do with automobiles. In fact, he had charge of about several expensive cars, Simplexes and so forth, that were owned by Clinton Hale, who was a wealthy Santa Barbaran of that period, and Vic worked for Clinton Hale. Well, when the motion picture company came to town, he was very much intrigued with the making of motion pictures, especially the photographic end of it, and somehow or other we became acquainted and he was very persistent. He came to the studio many times and wanted to know if I couldn't possibly engineer him in somehow because he did want to get in the picture business. So, eventually I was able to work it and Vic came on as my assistant cameraman. Well, we worked together for some time and eventually I went away on a location with some company and Vic remained here, and then I believe he became a first cameraman. He finally got an offer from one of the Los Angeles companies and went there. Eventually he went with Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. and Fairbanks seemed to take quite a liking to him and eventually made him a director, and Vic always turned in a good job and he was quite successful as a director and made better and better pictures and got better and better jobs until eventually he was chosen to direct *Gone With the Wind,* which was probably one of the greatest pictures made, at least up until that time, and undoubtedly the biggest money maker. Well, Vic Fleming, who was a local automobile mechanic here in Santa Barbara, directed the picture, for which he received an Academy Award, an Oscar, but Vic worked quite hard and didn't perhaps take enough vacation, so two or three years ago he passed away with a heart condition of some sort. But that's rather a success story, I think.

There were quite a few incidents. Some were amusing and some were— they were all interesting that occurred here in Santa Barbara. One rather comical procedure: the American Film Company perhaps had spent too much money on their new studio, so they got a sort of economical streak, and in those days instead of thousand-foot rolls of film, the rolls consisted of only four hundred feet. Well, four hundred feet doesn't last for a very long scene and it did happen occasionally that we would run out of film right in the middle of a scene. The normal procedure now, of course, if that happened, which is rare, is just do the scene over again after reloading with fresh film, but at that time they didn't want to waste that film, so they had it understood

that if they should run out of film in the middle of a scene, the director would say "hold it," and everyone would freeze in whatever attitude they happened to be in and would have to remain in that particular attitude like a frozen statue, while the cameraman got out a fresh roll of film, reloaded the camera, and the director would say "action," everybody would fall out and continue on. Then when those two reels were developed, they were cut as expertly as possible, joined together, and it was surprising how little jump you could see where the two rolls were joined.

Mrs. Overbaugh: They used to put a subtitle about in there, didn't they? Or a close-up or something, to hide that, but I remember it like when children used to play statue and they'd suddenly say "hold it" and you'd just freeze.

Mr. Overbaugh: Well, of course, if a studio ever did anything like that now it would cause hysterics and everybody would have convulsions or something. Well, that was one of the things. Another incident that occurred to me: some picture we were doing, the script called for a scene in which two cars were to have a collision and it had to be in town. So I think the corner of State Street and—it might have been Victoria, or it might have been further down. They had planned this thing out rather carefully. They didn't want anyone to get hurt, so they had taken one car and prepared dummies. They did a pretty good job on the dummies. They really looked like people and filled one car with dummies. This car—the driver had practiced with it so that he knew just where to set the throttle, the wheels were locked in a straight line so it would maintain its course and the driver had found out how far back from the intersection he would have to go to set the throttle in this given position, start the car and then jump off, so there you have a car with no driver and with a set throttle heading toward the intersection. Well, the other car which had a driver was supposed to run into this car which had no one in it. They had timed it so that they thought it would work all right, but they didn't allow for the weight of the driver himself, so that when they actually did the scene and the driver jumped off the car, the car relieved of his weight gathered speed a little faster than had been anticipated. So, the car that was to hit it missed it. This runaway carload of dummies went right down State Street and the other car had failed to connect with it. So here it was, right in traffic. Something deflected the front wheels, even though they were locked, and the car veered over toward the curb and smashed into some beautiful limousine belonging to someone in Montecito and with the impact all these dummies (it was an open car) skyrocketed out and landed on their heads, and several women screamed and fainted, of course not knowing they were dummies. It looked very real to them. They thought they were witnessing a terrific accident. The company had a lot of lawsuits on that, I believe. They had to buy a lady a new

limousine besides compensation for all the fainting spells and shock.

Mrs. Overbaugh: We were very fortunate that no one was injured. They could have been.

Mr. Overbaugh: Yes, that's right. No one was really injured, which was startling. Well, that's one of the things that occurred. But speaking of fatal injuries, there was a fatality that I remember very well. And they did the most daring things, more so than they would now. There was a scene called for by the script, in which a man, I believe he was a prisoner of some western gang or something, he was blindfolded, his hands were tied behind his back. This was actually done, and he was taken somewhere on top of a stagecoach. Well, according to the script he was supposed to try to escape. Now, imagine a man whose hands are tied behind his back and blindfolded, and they figured out a place, I think it was Mountain Drive, I'm not quite positive of the road, but at a certain point he was to jump as they went around the curve, and I think they figured he was either to land in some bushes or some water. I'm just not clear on that point. But anyhow, he did it. As he jumped, his head hit an overhanging rock and he was killed. Now, that's one of the tragedies. And it was especially regrettable because he was a wonderful man and so well liked by everybody. I think it was a long time before they attempted anything quite so daring as that, although previous to that they had done another thing which I happened to think of. I believe this was in a picture called *The Diamond from the Sky.* They decided to have, according to the story, an automobile race with a train, so they picked out some section along the Southern Pacific where the automobile road paralleled the railroad track.

Mrs. Overbaugh: That's between Carpinteria and Ventura.

Mr. Overbaugh: Oh, you remember that.

Mrs. Overbaugh: Yes, it still runs along the highway.

Mr. Overbaugh: Oh, I'd forgotten that.

Mrs. Overbaugh: But the road used to cross over the tracks.

Mr. Overbaugh: But it doesn't now?

Mrs. Overbaugh: It doesn't now.

Mr. Overbaugh: At this period, after running parallel for a while the automobile road did make a curve and cross the railway track. There was an express train that went through this track at a certain time every day. The company had that all figured out. So they got a driver, a rather daring driver, in a fast automobile and he was—they didn't tell the engineer on the train anything about this, of course. They had it planned so that the automobile was about two miles, I guess, from this place where the road crosses the track. The automobile engine was running and the automobile was going along very slowly until the train came by. Then the driver waved at the engineer in the cab and signalled "how about a race" or some-

thing like that, so the engineer put out a little more speed, I suppose, and he actually raced the train and the train went faster than he figured it could. He thought he could beat the train easily, but it was a close race, so that when he got to this place where the road crossed the railroad track they were almost neck and neck, but he was going so fast he couldn't stop anyhow, so he had to cross the track. Well, he just did. As a matter of fact, the cowcatcher, at the front part of the engine, just clipped his rear fender. It was that close. So that ended safely, but that could have been a very bad accident.

Mrs. Overbaugh: I remember, the engineer thought he'd actually hit him, and he was—he passed out or something.

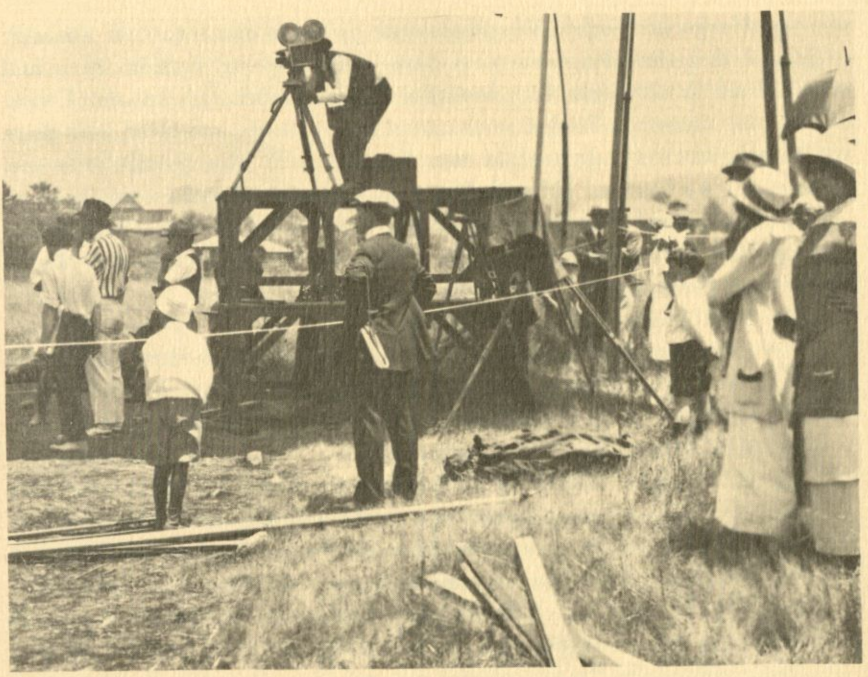
Mr. Overbaugh: Yes, that's right, the engineer fainted and the fireman had to take over.

Mrs Overbaugh: Yes, the fireman had to take over, and he was taken off the run for a long time.

Mr. Overbaugh: Yes, it was such a shock to him. Of course, he didn't know about this and he really thought he'd almost killed a man and it just unnerved him and the Southern Pacific just raised the dickens with the picture company here. I don't know what the outcome of it was, but there was a lot to do about that.

Another thing I remember, we did a picture called *The House of a Thousand Scandals* and the house in the picture had to be blown up, so they built quite an imposing looking mansion out on—well, out somewhere, just the front of it of course, the part that the camera would photograph, and they put a charge of dynamite in there, and I know I had the camera in a log cabin about a hundred feet away. I had to photograph the explosion, and they had a terrific charge of explosive in there, so I got the camera going and then all of a sudden they detonated this charge of dynamite. The house just blew up in little pieces. It rained down on this log shelter where I had the camera. It just rained, it seemed for about five minutes, and when everything cleared away, the house was gone entirely. So you see they did spectacular things even as long ago as that. . . .

All this that I'm telling about was in the early days, in the beginnings of the motion picture industry. It was also the beginning of the airplane industry. I remember a famous aviator of that time. He was quite a stunt flyer. His name was Lincoln Beachey. He'd be well known to people who are familiar with the history of aviation and we used him in a picture here in Santa Barbara and it seems to me in one of the scenes his plane dropped or fell and he wasn't hurt, and he climbed out of the tree all right. Another famous name in aviation is Glenn Martin. Of course, everyone knows of Glenn Martin. We used an early biplane of his in some scene in Hope Ranch. I still have a picture of Martin standing by one of his early models of a



Filming was a community affair

plane. It was a biplane. I still have that picture. Then there was another.

Mrs. Overbaugh: By the way, John Northrup—Jack Northrup—who was a native of Santa Barbara, lived on Bath Street, I think, about the corner of Bath and Ortega, and I lived on Bath Street and used to see him very often when I used to walk up going to school and see Jack Northrup. I knew him very well. A very fine young man, very studious. Always with his nose in a book, studying. He was, of course, a product of Santa Barbara. We're very proud of Jack Northrup.

Mr. Overbaugh: I don't suppose it was known at that time that he had a particular interest in aviation?

Mrs. Overbaugh: Oh, I don't believe so, no. He was interested in science and engineering.

Interviewer: Well, that is interesting. It just goes to show what illustrious people came from Santa Barbara, doesn't it? Something has just made me think of Magnin's. Now what was that? Magnin's, they were in some way . . . there was some association with Magnin's and the American Film Company. What was that?

Mrs. Overbaugh: Well, Magnin's had a very beautiful shop in the Potter Hotel, along with a few other exclusive shops that were in the hotel and the American Film Company was making a picture in which the leading lady,

who was Margarita Fischer, was to play the part of a mannequin or a model, so just at that time Magnin's were having their spring fashion show and they had six French girls, very beautiful French models, who modeled their dresses and Margarita Fischer wore one of these dresses and acted with them and these girls were all brought into the picture in this particular scene. I remember we have an old still. You may remember having seen it, taken on the Potter Hotel lawn, of these models and Margarita Fisher with a big sign in front saying "Magnin's Spring Fashion Show"—I believe 1914, if I remember correctly.

Mr. Overbaugh: Yes, I think it does.

Mrs. Overbaugh: And it's very interesting because it shows the styles of that period and also Magnin's, their first shop here.

Mr. Overbaugh: Incidentally, it seems to me I had to sing at that thing.

Mrs. Overbaugh: I don't remember that.

Mr. Overbaugh: Something about fashions. They had the poster girls sketched on a large paper enclosed in a frame and as I sang various verses of this—some song—the girls broke through the paper which had on it a sketch showing the particular costume they were wearing.

Interviewer: Speaking of the Potter Hotel and the Arlington, they were certainly landmarks of that period, weren't they?

Mrs. Overbaugh: Yes, wonderful places.

Mr. Overbaugh: Life sort of revolved around those places, and Diehl's grocery store. That was a favorite meeting place for especially the picture people. We missed no opportunity to go in there and have lunch or refreshments of some sort. There were always people that you knew in there. It was just like a club, almost, a lovely place. I sort of regretted the passing of Diehl's grocery store. And the Palace Theatre. Now, at that period the Palace Theatre was the leading motion picture theatre in town and I believe it was located on the east side of State Street, right near Cañon Perdido.

Mrs. Overbaugh: It was just north of Cañon Perdido. There was a bank on the corner and next door was the Palace Theatre.

Mr. Overbaugh: Well frequently, in order to see what our pictures looked like in an actual theatre presentation, we arranged with the manager of the Palace Theatre to come in there in the afternoons, or mornings sometimes, when the theatre was not in use, and run our completed pictures there. We really got a good idea of what they looked like.

Mrs. Overbaugh: Not only that, but all the Santa Barbara people who used to act in the pictures used to go to see them and the stills were put outside with all our pictures and it was really quite a thrill that you don't have nowadays.

Mr. Overbaugh: Yes, that's right. So many local people took part in the various pictures and it was really quite a thrill to go to see themselves. That

was the Palace Theatre. Also, those being silent pictures, the actors and actresses felt that for some of the more emotional scenes they couldn't properly get in the mood without the inspiration of music. So I remember we had, I think it was a James Campiglia, who played the violin.

Mrs. Overbaugh: Yes, his son has an orchestra now, Jimmy Campiglia; he was just a little boy then.

Mr. Overbaugh: Is that so? James Campiglia and his violin was a frequent visitor to the studio and played what you might call "mood" music to get the actors and actresses in the proper mood for whatever scene they might be doing.

Mrs. Overbaugh: Well, now that we're on the subject of music, I do remember too that they occasionally used my grandmother's harp, which I at the time used to play. In fact, I played with James Campiglia— I played the harp, he played the violin on several occasions. But they used to rent the harp to use in scenes and there was one scene in a picture in which Margarita Fischer, one of the leading actresses then, was supposed to be a wonderful harpist and she played the harp. I was not present when the scene was being made, but when the picture came out and was shown, here was Margarita Fischer sitting with the harp on the wrong shoulder (as you know, you hold the harp on the left shoulder) and went through all the motions backwards. It was really very funny. Of course they had no technical director and no one to tell them.

Mr. Overbaugh: That was quite a boner, wasn't it?

Mrs. Overbaugh: It really was. We used to make a lot of them in those days.

Mr. Overbaugh: I know they did. Now, of course, they have technical directors and script clerks. They check out everything; and research departments and all that. Very seldom a mistake gets through now.

Another thing I remember in the way of recreation at that period was the dances. They were very popular dances, given at Elks Hall, which was, I believe, where Montgomery Ward is now.

Mrs. Overbaugh: Corner of Figueroa and State.

Mr. Overbaugh: And that was the popular thing to do.

Mrs. Overbaugh: It was a very fine ballroom. There was a very beautiful floor mounted on springs and it was very fine.

Mr. Overbaugh: Everyone looked forward to those dances.

Mrs. Overbaugh: Speaking of dance music particularly, Roy, did I ever tell you that Edwin Gledhill's father was my first piano teacher? When I was a little girl in Santa Barbara he taught me, gave me my first lesson on grandma's little rosewood upright piano, and I remember him very well. I can just see him now. He was a very charming gentleman and I was very fond of him.

Mr. Overbaugh: And were you interested in the piano?

Mrs. Overbaugh: Oh, yes, very much so.

Mr. Overbaugh: You were a good student?

Mrs. Overbaugh: And he was an excellent teacher.

Mr. Overbaugh: Well, that's an interesting bit, too, isn't it? I've mentioned two pictures, *The Diamond from the Sky* and *House of a Thousand Scandals.* Just at the moment two other names of two other pictures we did occurred to me. One was called *Damaged Goods,* with Richard Bennett, I believe, and another one was called *Motherhood.* Just at the moment I don't recall the names of others, although of course there were probably hundreds.

Well, now, about this time there was a lot of enthusiasm about the picture business and some of the residents of Santa Barbara and Montecito decided that they should form a motion picture company of their own. So the matter was taken in hand and sufficient funds were raised and a motion picture company was organized with local people right here in Santa Barbara. It was called the Santa Barbara Motion Picture Company. I want to read a bit from a clipping in the local paper at that time. It is dated June 12, 1914. "This has been a week of accomplishment for the work on the studio of the Santa Barbara Motion Picture Company at 1425 Chapala Street. Huge piles of lumber and material are making an entire change in the appearance of the plant. An immense stage has been almost completed." Then there are a lot of incidental remarks here, then down at the bottom it says "All players engaged by the Company will report for work on June 22." This was 1914 so that establishes the date of organization of this company anyhow. I neglected to say, in reference to this company, that I left the American Film Company and went with this new company. There was quite some inducement: I had an offer of considerably more money and was given a thousand shares of stock and also a rather unheard of concession at that time—my name was to appear on the screen as having photographed this production. All this I just couldn't resist, so I left the "Flying A" and went with the Santa Barbara Motion Picture Company. Now, the officers of the company were: Dr. E. J. Boeseke, who was the father of Elmer Boeseke, the famous polo player, was president; H. M. A. Postley was the treasurer; and Lorimer Johnson was the general manager. O. W. Boeseke, Dr. Boeseke's brother, was the secretary. One of the stockholders was Mrs. John Beale. She later became Mrs. Child. The Child estate on Cabrillo Boulevard, which has recently been given to the city, was her home. Also, there was Mrs. Hugh Vail, and a Mrs. Sawyer. Several of those names that were associated with that motion picture company. Now their stars—they had a Los Angeles picture star by the name of Rena Valdez, also Mrs. Roland Sawter, who still lives in Santa Barbara.

Mrs. Overbaugh: Her name was Marty Martin.

Mr. Overbaugh: Yes, at that time her name was Marty Martin. She showed considerable dramatic talent and she played leads for a while with that new Santa Barbara company. Then there was Page Peters, and Jack Nelson, Scott Beale—that is about all the names I can remember right now. The name or their first picture was *The Envoy Extraordinary,* quite a pretentious costume picture.

Mrs. Overbaugh: A great deal of it was taken at El Mirasol.

Mr. Overbaugh: That was quite an extravagant production for that period. About this time we left Santa Barbara. I think it was late in 1916. We left for New York, where we lived for several years. This was followed by a trip and picture making in Europe. We stayed there about ten years, and eventually we returned here to Santa Barbara, about 1951, after an absence of something like 34 or 35 years. So when and why the motion picture companies went out of business I am unable to tell you. I'd like to know myself.

Mrs. Overbaugh: I don't think the pictures were very good, to be perfectly frank.

Mr. Overbaugh: You mean of the newer company.

Mrs. Overbaugh: Of the newer company.

Mr. Overbaugh: Well, I've very much enjoyed relating these reminiscences and I hope they will fit into the overall picture of Santa Barbara.

Mr. Overbaugh: Mr. Gledhill has just asked me if I wouldn't relate a few of my experiences during the years in which we were absent from Santa Barbara. This comes on me as a bit of a surprise, but I'll see what I can remember. As I said before, we left here about 1916 and went to New York. I think that I first went to New York with Norma Talmadge, to photograph her. She was there with a company called the Triangle Film Company. I went to New York and did some work with Norma Talmadge. I believe we did a picture called *Panthea,* and it was quite an interesting picture, my first picture in New York, and I was very homesick. It wasn't Santa Barbara and it wasn't California and I didn't like it at all and I was very blue and despondent and as a matter of fact, it took me quite a long time to become accustomed to working in the conditions in the east. The studios weren't nearly as nice and it was difficult getting to and from your work.

Mrs. Overbaugh: And the climate, too . . .

Mr. Overbaugh: The climate was horrible, and I just didn't like it.

Mrs. Overbaugh: By the way, wasn't Allan Dwan the director who was with the American Film Company for so long?

Mr. Overbaugh: Yes, he was, Allan Dwan. I think that's how I happened to be selected to go to New York to do this. Well, anyhow, it so turned out that I stayed in New York and one peculiar thing that pops into my mind is this: most all the stars I had to work with in New York, their names began

with B; it's very odd. B, the letter B, has figured quite prominently in a great many things in my life. There was John Barrymore; there was Constance Binney; there was Billie Burke, who is still acting quite successfully and—there are others.

Mrs. Overbaugh: Richard Barthelmess.

Mr. Overbaugh: And Alice Brady, but nearly every star I had to photograph, their last names began with B. I think there was one exception to that, Elsie Ferguson, but that's early in the alphabet anyway.

After finishing this Norma Talmadge picture, I believe they only did one in the east, and then she came back here, after this one picture, *Panthea*, and then I went with Famous Players Lasky. I was working with a director named John Robertson, and they decided to do a picture, one of Sir James Barrie's stories, *Peter Pan*, and the director that I had been working with, John Robertson, went to England to interview and talk with Sir James Barrie regarding the making of his *Peter Pan*, so after they had this consultation, this conference, it was decided to do it, and then I was sent for. So that's how I happened to go to England at first, but when I arrived something else had developed, and they decided not to do that picture just then, so instead we went to Spain and did a picture called *A Spanish Jade* with a star who later became quite prominent out here in Hollywood in underworld roles. Her name was Evelyn Brent and she was quite a good type for this particular picture that we did in Spain.

Mrs. Overbaugh: Wasn't it before that, though, that you did *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with John Barrymore?

Mr. Overbaugh: That's right. Yes. That was an extremely interesting picture, the silent version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with John Barrymore. John Barrymore was a delight to work with because he had considerable regard for the problems of a photographer, and although he was a handsome person, he called me aside one day and said, "Look, don't have me lit up like a portrait all the time. The less the audience can see of me, the more they'll be interested." He said, "Let funny shadows and weird lights hit me across the face, especially when I'm as Hyde." That was quite interesting from a cameraman's point of view because you felt you were allowed to experiment a little bit and try unusual things in the way of lighting, and I've always liked to work with John Barrymore from that standpoint. He's a very interesting person, so, as Marjorie says, we did that before we went to Europe.

We did this picture in Europe and then we came back to England and did another picture having to do with a one-ring French circus. We followed this little one-ring French circus all over France. The name of it was Cirque Pindare, wasn't that the name of it?

Mrs. Overbaugh: Yes. It was all along on the coast of Normandy.

Mr. Overbaugh: I don't remember the name of the picture, but it was a circus anyway, and exclusively.

So, then I believe after that we came back to New York, and then I think I went with a director named Henry King, and it was decided to go to Italy and do *The White Sister*. Lillian Gish was to play the White Sister and her sister Dorothy was also in the picture, and arrangements were made and they had the sailing date all set and had everything except the leading man. They had no leading man. Well, Henry King was the director and he tested many people and hadn't found anyone that he considered suitable for the part. He was getting pressed for time. He wanted to go to Atlantic City and lock himself up in a hotel room and work on the story, so he commissioned me and a still man by the name of James Abbey. He said, "Look, you two fellows run around the theatres in New York and see if you can locate anybody that might be worth trying out for this part." So we went around to the theatres. Eventually we went to a Henry Miller show. I believe the name of it was *La Tendresse*, and in the show, playing a minor part, was a man named Ronald Colman. Well, both James Abbey and myself thought that his appearance was what was wanted. He was sort of a Latin type, or could be. From a photographic standpoint we thought that he might be worth considering. Of course, we didn't presume to pass on his dramatic ability. We were just there for the photographic possibilities. So anyhow, we told Henry King, the director, when we got back that we'd found someone who might do, and King was interested and said, "Let's make a test of him anyhow." So Colman was contacted and he came to the studio. He was interested. And I remember that I made his first motion picture test and it was run in the projection room and everybody seemed pleased, so Colman got the job. So in that respect I was really instrumental in his first motion picture engagement in this country. I believe he had much earlier done some little picture work abroad. But anyhow, he went to Rome, Italy, to do this part in *The White Sister*, and although he was a little nervous about it at first, he developed very rapidly and as the picture progressed he became better and better and by the time it was over he was considered quite a hit.

Mrs. Overbaugh: He made a very, very handsome Italian officer, I remember. And another thing too, he's a very, very charming person.

Mr. Overbaugh: Well, this picture took nearly a year to finish, so after finishing it we came back to New York and fooled around there for a couple of months, then it was decided with practically the same cast to go back to Italy, Florence this time, and do *Romulo*. So we went to Florence and did *Romulo*. We had, I believe, just about the same cast, the Gish girls, Charley Lane and . . .

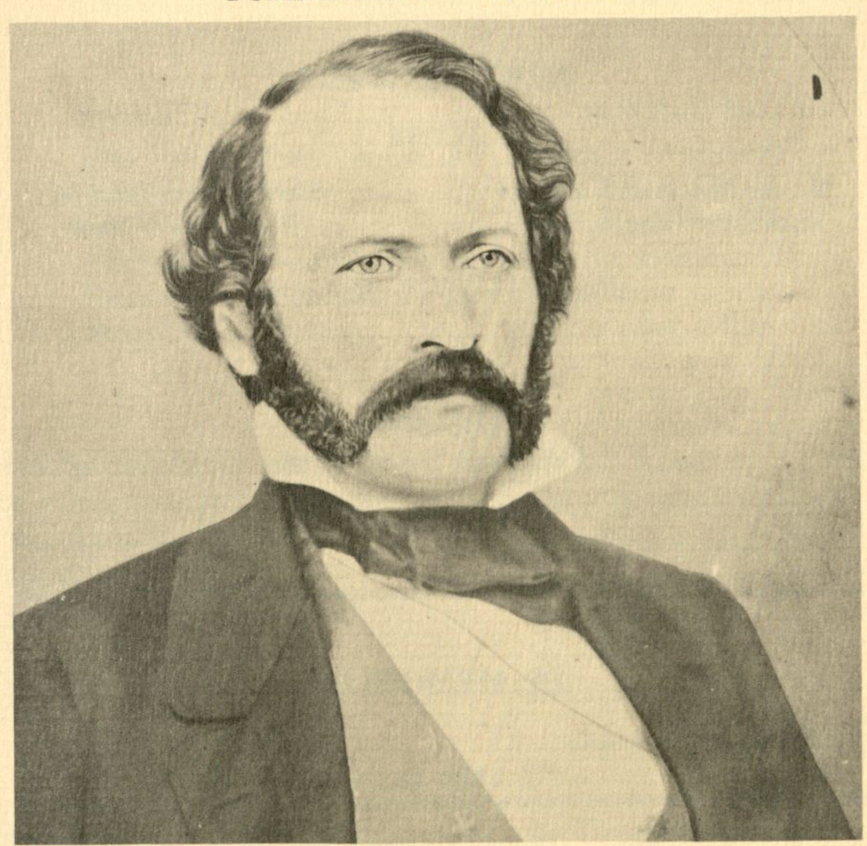
Mrs. Overbaugh: And William Powell.

Mr. Overbaugh: Yes, William Powell. He was a lot of fun too. Then, after finishing this, which took about another year, we came back to New York again and then Dorothy Gish was signed up to do a picture for a British company. She was going to do Nell Gwynne, and it seems that she had it in her contract that she wouldn't do it unless I would photograph it. I didn't know this at the time, but anyhow I was given the opportunity to go back to England and photograph Dorothy Gish in *Nell Gwynne,* and I enjoyed working with her and rather enjoyed London, too, so I was quite delighted to accept this proposition, so we went to London and made *Nell Gwynne* and that was quite a good picture, very well received and had lots of good notices. Then we came back to New York again. Then it was decided to organize a company and go to London and make several pictures. Well, I fell heir to this job, too, so we went back to London and made several pictures with different people; one was Will Rogers, I remember. And then with some of the British like Jack Buchanan, Nelson Keys, some of the better known British stars, and we made quite a few of them in Nice, France, also, so eventually that series of pictures terminated. Then I went with some other British companies. I went with one called Welch-Pearson. I did a picture with Sir Harry Lauder. That was a lot of fun too. I had a chance to get acquainted with some very well-known actors and actresses and I certainly enjoyed it.

Mrs. Overbaugh: I think that back in our minds the whole time was always the thought that some day we'd come back to Santa Barbara, because I think once you've been in Santa Barbara, whether you're a native or whether it's your adopted city, no matter where you go in the world, I'm sure that most people want to come back to Santa Barbara, and here we are.

Mr. Overbaugh: Oh, I think so too. We're back here now, but no picture company. Perhaps we should start one. Anyhow, that's really quite a tour we made in connection with the picture business, and it all started here in Santa Barbara, and as Marjorie says, here we are back again after having had a lot of very interesting experiences. Oh, there are many amusing and interesting things in connection with some of these pictures that were made in Europe, but it would take a long time to tell that and I can see the end of the tape in sight there so I think I'd better conclude these European travels right now.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

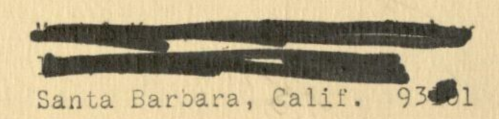


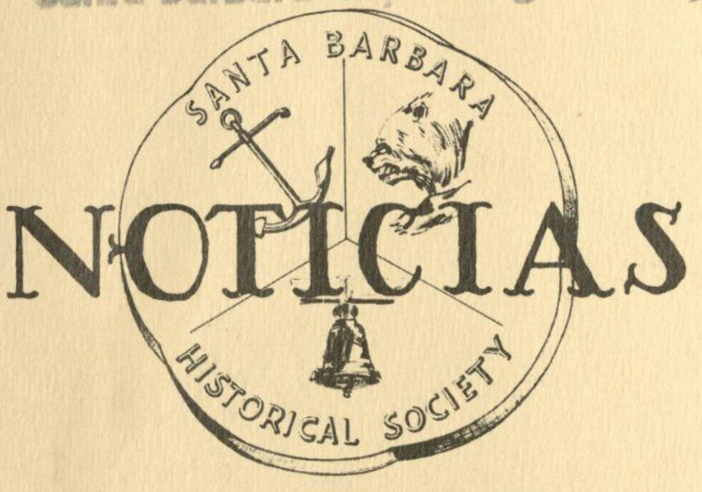
The Santa Barbara Bicentennial History Series, to be published by participating local organizations, will soon be available. The series, under the editorship of Dr. Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., Professor of History, University of Southern California, is made possible through the generosity of Mrs. Ernest Menzies and the Thomas More Storke Publication Fund, recently established under the Santa Barbara Foundation.

The entire series will be available through the Arthur H. Clark Company at a time to be announced. The Huse Journal, the second volume of the series, may be purchased from the Society by members at a ten percent (10%) discount.

By arrangement with Mrs. Menzies, all proceeds from the sale of the Journal will go into a special fund to be used for future publications by the Society with acknowledgment going to the Thomas More Storke Foundation when this fund is used.

QUARTERLY BULLETIN
OF THE
SANTA BARBARA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
136 EAST DE LA GUERRA STREET
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93101

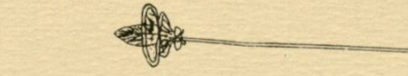

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Santa Barbara, Calif. 93[redacted]1

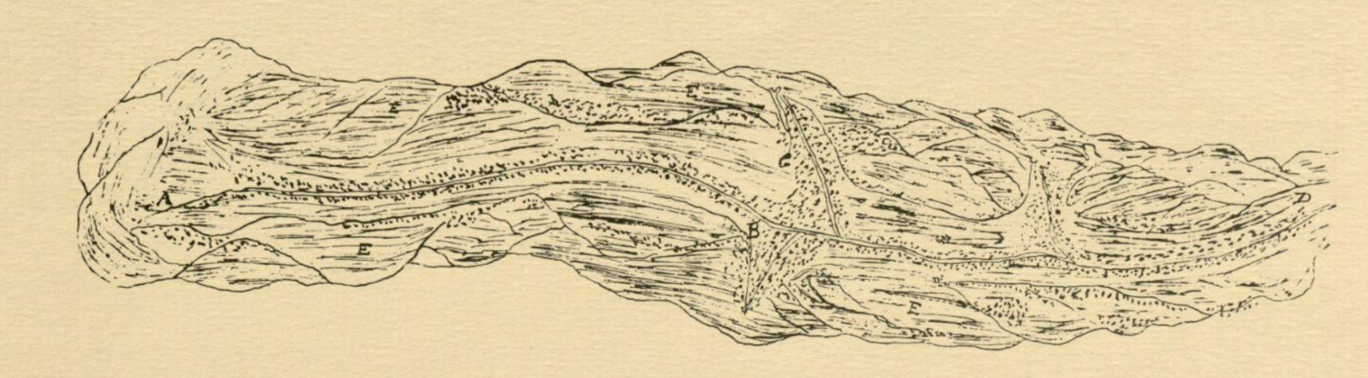




Las Cruces Adobe

Vol. XXII, No. 1 Spring, 1976





Escala de Millas

0 ¼ ½ ¾ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

A Camino y Lomas de Sta Rosa perteneciente la Mision de Sta Ynes
B Cañada de San Julian ó Rancho de la Nacion
C Cañada de Na-jao-ai
D Entrada de la Gaviota
E Lomas cubiertas de Sacate y Encino

Diseño of Rancho Las Cruces

Cover photo courtesy I. A. Bonilla.

A HISTORY OF THE LAS CRUCES ADOE

By

Barry N. Zarakov

In its desire to secure a power base in California, the Spani
ment in 1769 undertook the establishment of a series of presidios
coast, each of which was to act as a catalyst for future colonial de
It was hoped that growth would radiate from these areas as wel
the major connecting roads. As early as August 17, 1773, we find
nings of a land grant system in California under Viceroy Antoni
who issued a decree giving Commandant Rivera y Moncada the
grant the native population land for raising sheep and cattle. L
were also made to citizens of the pueblos with the stipulation that t
reside on the land given.[1] Under Spanish rule, however, little
actually granted. It was not until Mexico declared its independenc
9, 1822, after 280 years of Spanish domination, that we find any
change in land grant policies.

Between the years 1822 and 1847, Mexico encouraged c
through the passage of liberal laws which allowed the governor to
tracts of land ranging from one to eleven leagues [4,428 to 48,708
sparsely populated areas. These grants were almost always locat
the pueblos.[3] The 1824 law passed by the Mexican Congress stipu
"no one person shall be allowed to obtain the ownership of more
square league of irrigatable land, four leagues of land dependent
seasons [i.e., seasonal rainfall] and six for the purpose of raisin

A grant was obtained by petitioning the governor and sub
diseño (rough map) of the desired land. Since land was so plenti
early date, little stress was placed on specific boundaries; thus t
would refer to marked rocks or trees to define the property limits. T
in surveying and specifically defining the boundaries would prove
cause of serious problems after the Mexican War for those who ha
land grants. The petition requesting title would indicate the state o
tioner's Mexican citizenship, military and/or citizenship activities,
other relevant information concerning the assets and characte
petitioner.

Upon receipt of a request for a land grant, the governor wc
the matter to a local prefect or other local official who would
information in the petition, ascertain the loyalty and character of
tioner, and check to ensure that the desired land was part of t
domain. The finished report was then returned to the governor, and
as the determining factor if the governor had no personal relation
the petitioner or local official. If the governor agreed to the grant,

Cover photo courtesy I. A. Bonilla.

issue a *concedo*, an official order to make ready the grant papers.[5] Once issued, the *concedo* gave the petitioner the legal right to develop his land, even though he still lacked title. The grant was then submitted by the governor to the territorial legislature for final approval. If denied, the petitioner could appeal to the central government.

When approved, most land grants required that certain conditions be met by the grantee. Briefly, these were (1) that the grantee construct and occupy a permanent residence on the land granted within a year of the grant; (2) that the land might be fenced off if this did not interfere with public roads; (3) that the right of those living on said lands [i.e., native Indians] be respected; and (4) that the grantee have the local magistrate define and measure the boundaries, and that once defined, the grantee mark them "with fruit trees or forest trees of some utility."[6] After this final requirement was fulfilled, the grantee, now in legal possession of the land, would ceremonially pull up grass and earth and throw it about in the four cardinal directions, symbolizing ownership.

In 1835, following the secularization of mission lands, Miguel Cordero, a soldier at the Royal Presidio of Santa Barbara, applied to the Governor of California, Mariano Chico, for a land grant outside the Presidio. The area he desired was the land on which he had been living since his retirement from military service in 1833.[7] Cordero's family had been long established in California. His father, Mariano Cordero, along with other members of the Cordero family, were among the Spanish troops who came with Gaspar Portolá in 1769, aiding in the colonization of Monterey, San Francisco, and Santa Barbara.[8] In view of his family heritage, his own work at the Santa Barbara Presidio, and the Mexican government's desire to settle sparsely populated areas, in 1837 Miguel Cordero was granted two leagues of land fomerly belonging to Mission Santa Ynez.

Cordero's first petition, submitted to Governor Mariana Chico, noted his large family and possession of a large number of cattle as sufficient justification for a land grant. His request was approved by Chico on July 12, 1836, and the grant was confirmed by the Assembly within a month. However, before it was confirmed, Chico was forced to vacate office. On May 2, 1837, not knowing the fate of his request, Cordero submitted a second petition to Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado,[9] this one calling attention to his livestock, military service, and old age as reasons for the grant. Alvarado, who was in Santa Barbara at this time, consented to the grant on May 8, 1837. The grant was signed on May 11 and received final approval exactly one week later.[10] Along with the requested lands, Cordero also was granted the *sobrante* or lands unaccounted for between the land shown on his *diseño* and other nearby rancho lands already accounted for.[11] It was not until eight years later that Cordero had his boundaries officially measured and defined.[12]

While living on this property, probably as early as 1833, Miguel Cordero built his adobe house. His grant of 8512.81 acres[13] soon consisted of two fields under cultivation, primarily with wheat and barley, a garden near his house, a vineyard containing approximately two thousand grape vines, and an orchard of fruit rees including pears, apples and peaches. Cordero, who also raised cattle, surrounded his garden, house and one field with a fence as permitted by the provisions of the grant. In 1876, Cordero's eldest son, Vicente, added a third orchard of fruit trees.[14]

For many people the years between 1849 and 1856 represented the height of the cattle boom. Cattle brought record high prices, and those involved in cattle raising made record profits. Many times those who got rich quick had more money than they were accustomed to: saddles allegedly laden with silver and spurs of gold were examples of this encounter with riches. Robert Cleland writes:

> . . . a lady in Santa Barbara amused me by describing the old adobe houses, with earthen floors covered with costly rugs; four-post bedsteads with the costliest lace curtains, and those looped up with lace again; and the senora and senoritas dragging trains of massive silk and satin over the earthen floor. It must have been an odd mixture of squalor and splendor.[15]

Although such may not have been Cordero's situation, it is probable that he, too, partook of the high profits at the time. This is evident in the fact that Cordero did engage in the cattle business (leaving over one thousand head at the time of his death),[16] although there is no extant record of his income.

From a report that as late as 1846 the Tulare Indians still fought with the Coast Indians and made frequent attacks on residents of the area, stealing horses and cattle, it is evident that Las Cruces and nearby environs were not completely settled. In 1846 there was an alleged attack on the original Las Cruces Rancho in which sixteen persons were said to have been trapped within the adobe walls in a raid by the Tulare Indians. Accounts of this raid spoke of arrows sticking out of the walls of the house. Perhaps typical of western justice of those years, the Indians were later pursued and all but one killed. The horses were returned to their owners.[17]

Other evidence that this area was still frontier-like is found in an article in the *Los Angeles Star*, which reported on October 20, 1855:

> We well recollect of hearing of the robberies committed on the San Buenaventura and Santa Clara Rivers, in the county of Santa Barbara, the actual capture and spoilation of the Mission of Santa Buenaventura by the Indians, while Santa Ynez, Santa Rosa,

Lompos [sic], Los Alamos and other exposed Ranchos in the same country were actually stripped of all their horses.[18]

In early March, 1851, Miguel Cordero died suddenly after an illness of less than twenty-four hours.[19] Because of his unexpected death, there was no will. His estate comprised a thousand head of cattle, a considerable number of horses, his land, and his house. It is not known how much money was left as part of his estate.

Shortly thereafter, the United States Congress passed legislation entitled "An act to ascertain and settle Private Land Claims in the State of California." Since many of the original Mexican and Spanish land grants were vague in their description of boundaries, the purpose of this act was to specify the boundary lines and determine the validity of the titles of the various grants now that California was part of the Union. The Act required recipients of Mexican land grants to appear before a Board of Land Commissioners within two years with proof of title. If no such proof was available, grantees would often lose their land. If proof was presented, and the decision was in favor of the claimant, the decision would be appealed by the United States to the U. S. District Court where the presentation of proof of title was repeated. Following a verdict in this court in favor of the claimant, the case was appealed to the U. S. Supreme Court. All this took place at the expense of the defendant. Attorneys' fees were often paid in parcels of land. After the process had reached the Supreme Court, the question of title was resolved.

A second legal process followed all this, pertaining to the patent. This latter proceeding demanded that the Surveyor General survey the land at the expense of the grantee, after which the District Court would decide whether the patent should be issued.[20] Basically, the Act passed in 1851 was a legal measure to delay as long as possible the official recognition by the U. S. Government of the ownership of lands by Mexicans and native Californians.* Granted, as Kathleen Lane notes, that "the task assigned to this commission was great, [it being] asked to decide upon titles to a domain larger than many kingdoms of the world, with no knowledge of the Spanish people and customs, and much less a knowledge of Mexican law,"[21] because of this law

*While this interpretation of the California Land Act of 1851 reflects the widespread view of the Act as no more than legalized land grabbing, another view holds that the basic purpose of the Act was the removal of adjudication of land claims from Congress. to the courts, where it properly belonged. Although the Las Cruces grant was valid under Mexican law, most of the fifty-six grants made by Governor Pio Pico just before the cession of California were not. For a discussion of the facts and misconceptions regarding the California Land Act, the reader is directed to Paul Gates' article in the *California Historical Quarterly* for December, 1971.—Editor.

many of the lands granted originally to native Californians fell into the hands of bankers and lawyers during the time their cases were under legal consideration.

Since Cordero's widow, Maria Antonia Jiménez Cordero, could not read, write or speak English, she was not aware of the legal requirements of this Act, and since Santa Barbara had no newspaper at the time, there was little chance she could have known even if she had been able to read. She continued to reside on the land with her children, paying taxes on it until her death in 1857.[22]

Maria Antonia also died intestate and the Rancho was distributed among the nine children in undivided interests.[23] They built their own dwellings on the land and continued to live there, breeding sheep, cattle and horses. Between 1857 and 1876, six other adobe structures were constructed on the ranch, not including additions made to Miguel's original adobe house.[24] The adobe presently referred to as the Las Cruces Adobe was probably built during this time, perhaps about 1860.

Also during this time, the Corderos engaged in various real estate transactions, selling undivided interests in their land probably to compensate for financial losses following a glutted cattle market in the north. In 1860 the Corderos rented land to Frank L. Birabent[25] and the same year Pedro Baron settled on Rancho Las Cruces, engaging primarily in merchandising and stock raising. Baron remained in Las Cruces until 1870.[26]

The period between 1861 and 1864 was one of extremely hard times in California. During these years the inhabitants were first subjected to abnormal rains which caused serious flooding throughout the state, followed immediately by two years of drought. These forces of nature, assisted by an oversupply of cattle in the north in 1860, caused a large depreciation in the value of livestock. Fortunes were lost, the most vulnerable people being native Californians and Mexicans. Cattle were sold cheaply so that taxes could be paid. Besides the glutted northern markets and the extremes of nature, grasshoppers invaded some areas of the state, including Santa Barbara, and consumed vital summer and fall pasturage. In 1861, Pedro Carrillo noted in Santa Barbara:

> Everybody in this Town is Broke not a dollar to be seen, and God bless everyone if things do not change. Cattle can be bought at any price, Real Estate is not worth anything . . .
>
> The "Chapules" [grasshoppers] have taken posession of this Town, they have eat all the Barley, Wheat &c. &c. there is not a thing

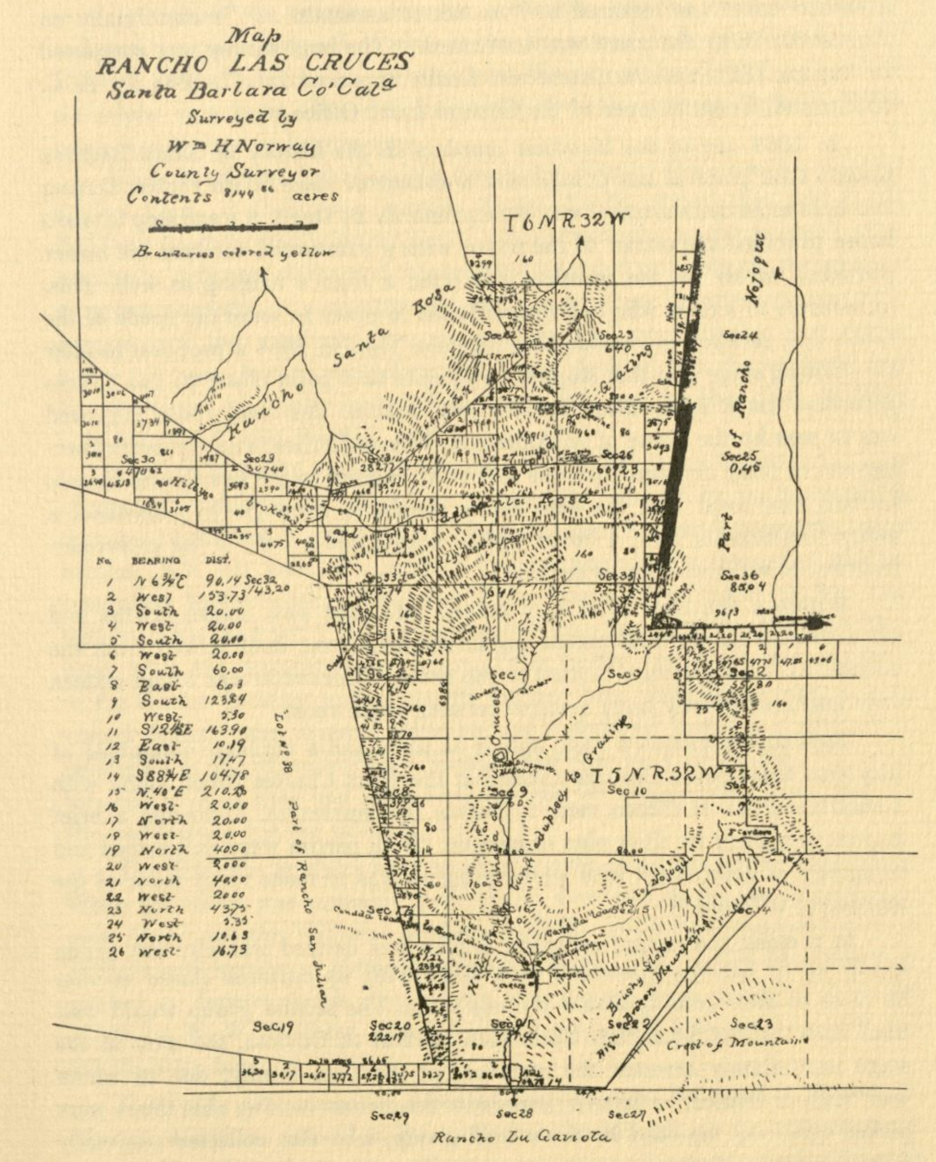
left by them, they cleaned me entirely of everything and I expect if I do not move out of Town they will eat me also. "Dam the Chapules," I have lost about two thousand dollars.[27]

Because of the floods of 1861, which reached an extent "Unknown to the oldest inhabitant,"[28] the collapse of the cattle market in the north, and the *chapules*, one of the most romantic periods of California's history came to an end. By 1864 most Spanish-Americans had been forced to sell their lands in order to meet daily living expenses and to pay taxes, primarily the latter. As Cleland notes, "Reduced by mounting debts and unpaid taxes to the condition of a 'devastated grain field,' the little that was left of their once lordly estates passed forever into alien hands."[29]

That the Corderos were affected by these disasters is unquestioned. Over nine-tenths of the cattle, horse and sheep population in Santa Barbara County are said to have died during the drought of 1863-1864.[30] Though no records exist of the Corderos' financial condition at this time, in their 1876 petition to Congress for the official patent it is mentioned that they were poor and lived solely off their land.[31] This suggests that they were unable to make a financial comeback following the series of disasters of the sixties.

After the enactment of the Homestead Act of 1862, the U.S. Surveyor General began to measure tracts of land for the thousands of Yankee settlers heading west. Since the Corderos never fulfilled the requirements demanded by "An act to ascertain. . . ." the Federal Government considered Rancho Las Cruces part of the public domain. Thus in the latter half of the decade, lands on Rancho Las Cruces were surveyed to be catalogued as such and therefore eligible for homesteading. Seeing this development and the increased activity in the area due to the stage lines as potential threats, the Corderos and others who had purchased undivided interests in Rancho Las Cruces[32] submitted a petition to the United States Congress in 1876, requesting permission to secure their land patent. Though the title was confirmed to Vicente Cordero *et al.* on September 7, 1871,[33] without the patent the title was meaningless.

Submitted as part of their petition to Congress were numerous letters from prominent citizens of Santa Barbara attesting to the character of the Corderos and verifying that they indeed had resided on Rancho Las Cruces from 1833. Those submitting depositions included Lewis T. Burton, who had known Miguel Cordero, the original grantee of the lands, since 1831; Judge Charles Fernald; County and District Court Clerk H. P. Stone, who testified that Vicente Cordero had paid taxes on the land since 1850; Judge John Maguire; and James L. Ord. Other prominent citizens included State Senator Antonio Maria de la Guerra and the president of the Board of Supervisors, Thomas Moore.[34]



Rancho Las Cruces, 1876

Congress granted the Corderos permission to have their case tried before a district court (as required by "An act to ascertain . . .") and finally on August 31, 1880, the grant was confirmed.[35] The land survey was completed in August, 1881, and the patent was finally approved July 7, 1883, by A. C. McFarland, Commissioner of the General Land Office.[36]

In 1864 one of the bloodiest murders in the history of Santa Barbara County took place at Las Cruces over a change of stage coach routes. During this time most distant travel was done primarily by stage. A stage stop at one's house provided the owner of the house with a substantial income, the owner providing meals for the travelers and often a night's lodging as well. This, in addition to a crew who boarded full time in order to serve the needs of the coach line, resulted in considerable revenue. Thus in 1864 a proposal to alter the existing stage line that stopped at Gaviota to a point closer to Las Cruces generated much competition for the new station. The final route approved was to pass by the house of an American, Wilson Corliss, a sheepherder owning two or three thousand head as well as an interest in the Las Cruces Ranch. Corliss, who lived with his wife and a shepherd, Franc[isc]o Coronado, a native Californian, built a house within a mile and a half of the crossroads in order to serve the new stage line.

Within a few days after they moved into their new house, Corliss and his wife were beaten and placed inside the house, the door locked from the outside, and the structure burned to the ground. Coronado was found sixteen days later, his bloody body wedged between some rocks.

The murder caused a huge uproar in town and a vigilante committee of fifty men from Santa Barbara formed at the Saint Charles Hotel, along with a sheriff's posse of fifteen men, to pursue the murderers. Following a brief inquest they drew up their plan of pursuit. "Both parties were well armed and composed of determined men whose purpose was to make short work of the murderers if found.[37]

In a cloak-and-dagger escapade, a plan was devised whereby one group would go to Gaviota concealed in a stage with its curtains closed so that no news of their coming would precede them. The second group would wait until dusk before departing. Upon their arrival at Gaviota, the men in the stage immediately arrested the members of the Cota family, one of whom was "Cabeza Blanca," a known desperado. Suspicious-looking characters were picked up along the road by the second group, who also collected testimony from nearby residents.

After a sixteen-day investigation at the site of the murder, three major suspects emerged. These were the Williams brothers—Bill, Elize, and Steve—from Oregon, who lived fairly close to the Corlisses and who were competing to get the stage coach stop in Las Cruces.[38] So sure were they that they would get the new station that the brothers had had a corral and barn built for the

stage horses. They probably remodeled the interior of the house at this time as well as built the exterior wooden additions. Interior changes probably included the partioning off of what is now the central bedroom as well as the addition of the fireplace in order to meet the new demands to be placed on the adobe as a hotel. The exterior rooms were to serve as kitchen, dining room, and bedrooms for travelers.

While the Cotas from Gaviota also had a motive, there was no evidence against them. A California woman, Ysabel Yorba, stated that one of the Williams brothers had solicited her to place strychnine in the Corliss's milk, which she delivered daily, and this testimony tended to implicate the brothers as prime suspects. It was suggested that the brothers be arrested and mock hanged until they confessed, but many of the vigilantes felt that such action was a bit rash. A vote was taken and it was decided that the evidence was circumstantial, the only proven fact being that one brother had proposed poisoning the Corliss family.

The affair finally ended in acquittal for the Williams brothers for want of concrete evidence, although it was generally believed by the townspeople that they were indeed guilty. After the excitement had died down, the oldest brother, Bill, left town to return to Oregon and shortly thereafter the two remaining brothers were murdered while camping one night in San Luis Obispo. They had left Las Cruces to move their sheep to the Tulare Valley, away from the drought-ridden areas. Their murder was evidently unrelated to the Corliss incident and appeared to have been done for money. A man named Stanner was arrested after he was discovered wearing a gold watch belonging to one of the brothers. Stanner had been working for the Williamses for only a short time and most likely he had no motive other than robbery. He was hanged for the crime.[39]

The Williams brothers lived in what is now called the Las Cruces Adobe. While the adobe was probably built by the Corderos in the late 1850's, it is most likely that the Williams brothers built the wooden exterior additions in 1864 in anticipation of obtaining the stage route. The original barn that they erected no longer stands, the present one having been constructed in the 1880's by W. W. Hollister. The old stage road passed between the adobe and the Hollister barn.

Following the deaths of three of the Williams brothers, a fourth, A. Bascom Williams, arrived in Santa Barbara to investigate the circumstances surrounding their deaths as well as to tie up any loose business affairs of theirs. He decided in the fall of 1866 to take up residence in Las Cruces and remained there until he was elected County Clerk of Santa Barbara in 1880.[40] While living in the Las Cruces Adobe, Williams "had the unique distinction of being postmaster, deputy sheriff, constable, and justice of the peace there."[41] A man of many facets, Williams also served as judge of the township court[42]

(a position held formerly by his brother Elize)[43] as well as managed his adobe as a stage stop.

For four years his adobe served in this capacity. Then, from 1870 to 1872, the local stage company violated its contract with the U. S. Post Office Department. During this period the Las Cruces Adobe, while still considered the only post office in the third township of Santa Barbara, received and distributed no mail. A letter to the *Santa Barbara Press* in 1872 noted that this violation by the stage line subjected "the people of this part of the County to much inconvenience, and positive loss of time and money."[44] As postmaster, Williams received a total of $12 per year in postage stamps as his salary, although for these two years his quarterly report simply read no mail received, none dispatched.[45]

The stage company evidently remained in violation of its contract until late in 1873 when the *Santa Barbara Weekly Press* mentioned that a new mail contract had been negotiated. The new stage route was to go through Gaviota, Las Cruces, Nojoqui, and the Santa Ynez Mission, where it would connect with Bucklay.[46] This stage line, traveling between Santa Barbara and Guadalupe,[47] may have been the one owned by Don Miguel Burke.

Traffic to and from the adobe undoubtedly increased substantially after 1875 when W. W. Hollister, with Thomas and Albert Dibblee, constructed a wharf at Gaviota to export their supplies of wool. The wharf soon became the major exporting site for the farmers of the Santa Ynez and nearby valleys. Many would bring their goods to the wharf by way of the Gaviota Pass to be shipped to market by steamer, stopping overnight at the adobe before making their way back to Santa Ynez.[48]

During the late 1870's, Williams was elected County Clerk of Santa Barbara and moved from Las Cruces into town. In 1877 R. J. Broughton moved into the adobe and assumed similar responsibilities as hotel manager, storekeeper, and postmaster.[49] Working at Las Cruces station, he came into contact with many people, and thus the adobe seems to have served as a stepping stone to public office, for in 1883 Broughton also became an elected official, gaining the position of Santa Barbara County sheriff.[50]

It has been suggested that at this time the adobe became notorious as a brothel and whiskey emporium, serving the needs of the men on their trip back to Santa Ynez.[51] However, to what extent this was true remains in question because the adobe was managed during these years by Sheriff Broughton.

On June 28, 1880, Vicente Cordero sold his share in Rancho Las Cruces to W. W. Hollister and the Dibblee brothers, local land barons, for $2,218. The exact acreage was not specified in the sale, rather the land was simply described as Rancho Las Cruces and the neighboring ranches were named in order to define the boundaries.[52] Cordero sold the land in 1880, although it was not until July 7, 1883, that his patent was finally confirmed.[53] Along

with the sale there may have been a gentlemen's agreement whereby the Corderos were permitted to continue living on the lands. As far as the occupants of the Las Cruces Adobe were concerned, there were probably few if any consequences from the change of ownership except that they paid their rent to a different landlord.

The Hollister-Dibblee empire continued to grow and by 1891 it comprised over 100,000 acres, including Ranchos San Juan, Salsipuedes, Espirada, Santa Anita, Gaviota, and Las Cruces. The entire area was referred to as the San Julian Ranch, and the partnership owned between 50,000 and 75,000 head of sheep and five hundred head of cattle.[54]

With the arrival of the narrow gauge railroad at Los Olivos in 1889, farmers from Santa Ynez no longer had to make the long trip to the Gaviota wharf to ship their goods.[55] However, the loss of patronage from the Santa Ynez farmers did not hurt Las Cruces in any way, for in the same year the Southern Pacific Railroad was extended to the coast. Those stages previously using the San Marcos Pass now began taking the easier grade from Gaviota to Las Cruces.[56]

Following the death of Sheriff Broughton, a Basque sheepherder, Jacob Loustalot, and his wife Rosaline rented the adobe from the Hollisters. The adobe still fulfilled its established function as stage stop, cafe, and bar, but it was no longer a hotel. The station was frequented by the numerous ranch hands working for the Hollisters, who stopped by for meals as well as drinks. During the Loustalots' stay at the adobe, a tack room was added between the house and the barn to satisfy the expanded needs of Hollister's ranch.[57]

With the completion of the Southern Pacific Coast Line, use of the adobe dwindled rapidly. Although stages continued to link Solvang with the railroad at Gaviota as late as 1914,[58] the adobe only served in the capacity of cafe-bar. Jacob Loustalot died in 1916 and three years later his wife left Las Cruces. Others who lived in the adobe for short periods following the Loustalots were respectively Vicente Ortega, Oliver Johnson, and Frank Lugo.[59] The Hollisters continued to use the ranch house as a stopover when driving their cattle through the pass for shipment by the Southern Pacific. Dibblee Poett recalls driving cattle to Gaviota in the late teens, noting:

> We usually left Rancho San Julian in the early morning, arriving at Las Cruces about noon, when the cattle would rest and water there for about an hour; and then go down the pass. There were usually four or five riders in the lead to warn approaching drivers or to prevent the lead cattle from straying into the creek or nearby hills.[60]

Poett also notes that vaqueros wearing red bandanas rode in the lead to warn motor traffic coming up the pass to pull off the road and permit the

herd to continue. After the early twenties, cattle were still driven through the pass with the aid of members of the California Highway Patrol who would warn motorists of what was coming down the road, a practice that continued until shortly after World War II.[61] Also in the immediate area during the twenties were a small store owned by John and Cesarina Loustalot and an inn run by Charles Nicholas.[62]

Adobe houses are fragile structures, and if not cared for properly they quickly fall to ruin. A photograph of Rancho Las Cruces taken in 1940 (see cover) shows its condition about ten years after it was vacated. Since that time a new highway has been built and the adobe has remained virtually ignored, subject to much vandalism and malicious mischief. As the forces of nature take their toll, most of the shingles have blown off, the roof has caved in, and the walls have fallen over.

In October, 1967,[66] the State of California purchased Rancho Las Cruces from the Hollister Company. Since then plans have been made to restore the adobe to its condition during the most historically significant period of its use—the 1880's and 1890's. It would seem within the realm of possibility that it might once again be used (perhaps as a youth hostel) for lodging travelers making their way along the California coast. Although today it stands in its ruined state with the freeway as a backdrop, the Las Cruces Adobe serves to remind us of an important part of Santa Barbara County's history.

NOTES

1. Rose H. Avina, *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in California* (San Francisco, 1973), p. 16.
2. Between 1822 and 1847, 428 Mexican land grants were approved in California. For a complete list of these grants, see Avina, *Ibid.*, pp 36-90.
3. Charles E. Huse, *Sketch of the History and Resources of Santa Barbara City and County, California* (Santa Barbara, 1876), p. 14. Different sources quote different acreage equivalents for Spanish leagues. Huse gives 4,438 acres per league, while Avina give 4,428.
4. Robert H. Becker, *Diseños of California Ranchos: Maps of Thirty-seven Land Grants (1822-1846), from the Records of the United States District Court, San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1964), p. xii.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. xiii-xiv. United States district courts, when later verifying individual claims of Mexican land grantees, considered the date of the *concedo* as the legal cession of land from the public domain.
6. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
7. *Ibid.*, Chapter 28.
8. H. H. Bancroft, *History of California*, 2, p. 767.
9. For text of his request, see Appendix I.
10. For text concerning the ceremony following approval, see Appendix II.
11. Becker, *loc. cit.*

12. *Ibid.* The Rancho Las Cruces was defined until this time as being bordered on the north by Rancho Santa Rosa and Nojoqui; on the northeast and east by the Cuchilla (ridge) and Nojoqui; on the south by Rancho Gaviota; and on the west by Rancho San Julian.
13. This figure represents the final size of the Ranch ultimately determined by the United States Surveyor General in 1881. Santa Barbara County Surveyor's Office. *Patents*, Book A., p. 584.
14. *In the Matter of Rancho Las Cruces, Santa Barbara County, California. Petition to Congress by Claimants* (Washington, D. C., 1876), pp. 12, 20.
15. Robert Glass Cleland, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills: Southern California, 1850-1880* (San Marino, 1951), p. 106.
16. *In the Matter of . . ., op cit.*, p. 20.
17. Jesse D. Mason, *History of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties* (Oakland, 1883), p. 301.
18. Anonymous, "Indian Affairs in the South," *The Los Angeles Star*, Oct. 20, 1855, p. 2.
19. *In the Matter of . . ., op cit.*, p. 21.
20. Huse, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
21. Kathleen Rosella Lane, *The Early History of Goleta* (unpublished thesis, University of Southern California, 1935), p. 33.
22. *In the Matter of . . ., op cit.*, pp. 22, 24.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 22. Miguel's children were José Antonio, Vicente, José Gregorio de Jesus Miguel Higinio, Juan de Parma, José de Jesus, Tomas de Jesus, Isabel, Maria Reyes (died in infancy), José Salvador, Juan Jesus Antonio, and Maria Teresa (died in infancy). Santa Barbara Historical Society genealogical records.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 39, 44.
25. Owen H. O'Neill, *History of Santa Barbara County—Its People and Its Resources* (Santa Barbara, 1939), II, p. 142.
26. Relatives of Baron, Pierre and Iran Baron, purchased land at an auction held by order of the Superior Court in 1861. Santa Barbara County Hall of Records, *Book of Deeds*, Book C., p. 587.
27. Cleland, *op., cit.*, p. 126.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 136-137.
30. According to Huse, less than eight inches of rain fell this year (Huse, *op. cit.*, p. 14).
31. *In the Matter of . . ., op. cit.*, p. 25.
32. The nine parties listed in the 1876 Petition include: (1) Vicente Cordero; (2) Juan J. Cordero; (3) Heirs of Ysabel Cordero Valenzuela (deceased) — Refugia, Felipa, Maria Antonia, Concepción, Micaela, Gertrudis, Juan, and Eugenio; (4) A. B[ascom] Williams; (5) Thomas B. Dibblee; Albert Dibblee, and W. W. Hollister; (6) Ramon Gonzales; (7) J. M. Short; (8) O. D. Metcalf; (9) Heirs of Augustus J. Dinsmore (deceased)—Sarah, Albert, Bradley T., Fanny E., Thomas, Irwin W.
33. O'Neill, *op. cit.*, frontispiece map.
34. *In the Matter of . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 5ff.
35. Becker, *op... cit.*, Chapter 28.
36. Santa Barbara County Surveyor's Office, *Patents*, Book A., p. 584.
37. William A. Streeter, "Recollection of historical events in California, 1843-1878," edited by William Ellison, *California Historical Society Quarterly*, XVIII, No. 3 (1939), p. 262.
38. Elize Williams was justice of the Third Township at the time of the murder.
39. Streeter, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-264.
40. Anonymous, "A. B. Williams services to be tomorrow," *The Morning Press*, Feb. 16, 1937, p. 3, and Santa Barbara County Archives, Office of the Clerk of the Board.
41. Anonymous, "New mail routes," *Santa Barbara Weekly Press*, July 19, 1873, p. 5.
42. *The Morning Press, loc. cit.*, reported on his death in 1937 that Williams was proud of his record as judge, "for he never opened a docket but was able to get litigants together in a conference, at which they invariably settled their differences amicably out of court."
43. Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 262.
44. Fessor, "Letter from Las Cruces," *Santa Barbara Press*, June 15, 1872, p. 2. This letter also calls attention to Las Cruces as a future rural retreat for pleasure and health seekers because of the nearby sulfur hot springs (temperature 95°), located less than a mile from the adobe.

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45 *Ibid.*
46. Anonymous, "New mail routes," *loc. cit.*
47. Walker Tompkins, *Yankee Barbareños* (unpublished MS in the Santa Barbara Public Library). According to an advertisement in the *Santa Barbara Press* of March 23, 1872, page 1, in the 1870's it took forty-eight hours to travel from Santa Barbara to San Francisco via the Coast Line Stage.
In March, 1874, Burke changed the stage route to bypass Las Cruces and go through San Marcos Pass and Ballard. However, according to O'Neill (*op. cit.*, p. 460), Las Cruces was a stage stop from 1878 through 1901. It is probable that more than one stage serviced this stop, so that although Burke changed his route, other stages continued to stop at the Las Cruces Adobe.
48. Dibblee Poett, "The Gaviota Pass," *Noticias* (quarterly bulletin of the Santa Barbara Historical Society), X, No. 2 (1964), p. 8.
49. Yda Addis Storke, *A Memorial and Biographical History of the Counties of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura* (Chicago, 1891), p. 491.
60. List of sheriffs of Santa Barbara County in Santa Barbara Historical Society Library.
51. Walker Tompkins, "Las Cruces Hotel ruins," *Santa Barbara News-Press*, Feb. 23, 1975, p. C-8.
52. Santa Barbara County Hall of Records, *Book of Deeds*, Book W, p. 62. The land was described as bounded on the south by Rancho La Gaviota, which is part of the Rancho Nuestra Senora del Refugio; on the west by Rancho San Julian, and land of the parties of the second part (i.e., the Hollisters and Dibblees), on the north by Rancho Santa Rosa and public lands of the United States, and on the east by Rancho Nojoqui, the Cuchilla (ridge) of the Nojoqui and by public lands of the United States.
53. Santa Barbara County Surveyor's Office, *Patents*, Book A., p. 584.
54. Storke, *op.. cit.*, p. 652.
55. Poett, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-10.
56. Tompkins, *YB*, *op. cit.*, p. 609.
57. Interview with Vicente Ortega, April 24, 1975.
58. Tompkins, *YB*, *op. cit.*, p. 609.
59. Interview with Caroline D. Henning, April 26, 1975.
60. Poett, *loc. cit.*
61. *Ibid.*
62. Interview with Caroline D. Henning, April 26, 1975.
63. Santa Barbara County Hall of Records, Book 2207, p. 1050, Oct. 10. 1967.

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APPENDIX I

To His Excellency, the Governor:

I, Miguel Cordero, of this vicinity, before your excellency, with due respect, appear and say: That, being desirous of devoting myself to agriculture, since I am the owner of a considerable amount of stock, and being aware that, under the laws of colonization, I must apply to your honor, as I do, asking for a grant of the place named "Las Cruces." This tract of land, although it has belonged to the ex-mission of Santa Ines, is at present unoccupied, and the said mission does not need the same. Wherefore I think that the same is in a condition to be colonized, and I think there is nothing to prevent said place from being granted.

My old age, and the military services I have given to the country, impel me to make this petition to your honor.

Wherefore I pray your honor to be pleased to grant my petition, admitting this on common paper, for want of sealed paper.

Santa Barbara, May 2d, 1837.

At the request of the petitioner.

JOSÉ DE LA GUERRA Y CARRILLO.

(Translation of Expediente, presented as Exhibit "B" at proceedings
In the Matter of Rancho Las Cruces)

APPENDIX II

On the said Rancho of Las Cruces, and on the same day, month, and year, Don Miguel Cordero, a resident of the port of Santa Barbara, in company with the Alcalde and the assisting witnesses: he said, that the lands of this Rancho, having been measured, as shown by the foregoing proceedings, he took the true and corporal possession of the said lands, since they belonged to him by the just title, which was issued to him by the superior government of the department. He entered upon and passed over said lands, pulling up herbage and scattering handfuls of earth, breaking branches of trees, and making other demonstrations, as a sign of the possession, which he said he took, of said land. Whereupon I, the said Alcalde, ordered that, from that time forth, he should be considered as the owner and possessor of the same.

Of all of which the said Miguel Cordero asked a testimony for the future security of his rights, which I, the said Alcalde, gave, signing the same with the assisting witnesses.

NICOLAS A. DEN.

Assist. RAYMUNDO CARRILLO.

Assist. JOSÉ Ma. ORTEGA.

(Translation of document in support of petition
In the Matter of Rancho Las Cruces)

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Vicente Ortega, April 24, 1975.
Dibblee Poett, April 15, 1975.



A MEDICAL CURIOSITY

Robert W. Bates of Carpinteria has drawn our attention to the following account by Dr. M. H. Biggs, a physician who came to Santa Barbara in 1853 and later became an associate of Mr. Bates' father, Dr. C. B. Bates. It appears in a collection of accounts dealing with psychic and other phenomena published in 1903[1] The term "magnetism" as used here derives from the 18th-century Austrian mystic and physician Franz Anton Mesmer, who believed hypnosis was an occult force, which he called "animal magnetism," that flowed through the hypnotist to the subject. The term "hypnotism" was coined in the mid-19th century by James Braid, an English physician who recognized the psychological nature of the phenomenon. As this account by Dr. Biggs shows, hypnosis was used by 19th-century physicians more as a curiosity than as therapy, and scientific investigation had to wait until the 1920's and later.

October 18th, 1885

. . . Another case . . . was the first of this kind of experiment I tried; it was in Santa Barbara, California. I was staying there in 1879 with a friend, Mr. G.[2] a long-resident chemist of that town. His wife had a kind of half servant and half companion, a girl of about eighteen, who complained to me one day of a pain through her chest. Without her knowing what I intended to do, I tried magnetism; she fell into a deep magnetic sleep in a few minutes. With this subject I tried many interesting experiments, which I will pass over. One day I magnetized her as usual, and told her in a whisper (I had found her to be more susceptible this way than when I spoke aloud in my usual voice), "You will have a red cross appear on the upper part of your chest, only on every Friday. In the course of some time the words *Sancta* above the cross and *Crucis* underneath it will appear also; at the same time a little blood will come from the cross." In my vest pocket I had a cross of rock crystal. I opened the top button of her dress and placed this cross on the upper part of her manubrium, a point she could not see unless by aid of a looking-glass, saying to her, "*This* is the spot where the cross will appear." This was on a Tuesday. I asked Mrs. G. to watch the girl and tell me if anything seemed to ail her. Next day Mrs. G. told me she had seen the girl now and again put her left wrist over the top of her chest, over the dress; this was frequently repeated, as if she felt some tickling or slight irritation about the part, but not otherwise noticed; she seemed to carry her hand up now and then unconsciously. When Friday came I said, after breakfast, "Come, let me magnetise you a little; you have not had a dose for several days." She was always

[1]Frederick William Henry Myers, *Human personality and its survival of bodily death.* N. Y., Longmans, 1903. 2 vols.

[2]Benigno Gutierrez, whose drugstore is still in business at 635 State Street.

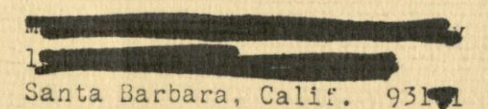
willing to be magnetized, as she always expressed herself as feeling very much rested and comfortable afterwards. In a few minutes she was in deep sleep. I unbuttoned the top part of her dress, and there, to my complete and utter astonishment, was a pink cross, exactly over the place where I had put the one of crystal. It appeared every Friday, and was invisible on all other days. This was seen by Mr. and Mrs. G., and by my old friend and colleague, Dr. B.,[3] who had become much interested in my experiments in magnetism, and often suggested the class of experiments he wished to see tried. About six weeks after the cross first appeared I had occasion to take a trip to the Sandwich Islands. Before going I magnetised the girl, told her that the cross would keep on showing itself every Friday for about four months. I intended my trip to the Islands to last about three months. I did this to save the girl from the infliction of this mark so strangely appearing perhaps for a lifetime, in case anything might happen to me and prevent me from seeing her again. I also asked Dr. B and Mr. G. to write me by every mail to Honolulu, and tell me if the cross kept appearing every Friday, and to be careful to note any change, such as the surging of blood or the appearance of the words *Sancta Crucis.* I was rather curious to know if the distance between us, the girl and myself, over 2,000 miles, made any difference in the apparition of the cross. While I was at the Sandwich Islands I received two letters from Mr. G. and one from Dr. B. by three different mails, each telling that the cross kept on making its appearance as usual; blood had been noticed once, and also part of the letter S above the cross, and nothing more. I returned in a little less than three months. The cross still made its appearance every Friday, and did so for about a month more, but getting paler and paler until it became invisible, as nearly as possible four months after I left for the Sandwich Islands. The above-mentioned young woman was a native Californian, of Spanish parentage, about eighteen years of age, in tolerably good health, parents and grandparents alive. She was of fair natural intelligence, but utterly ignorant and uneducated . . .

—M. H. Biggs, M. D.

[3]Dr. C. B. Bates, associate of Dr. Biggs.

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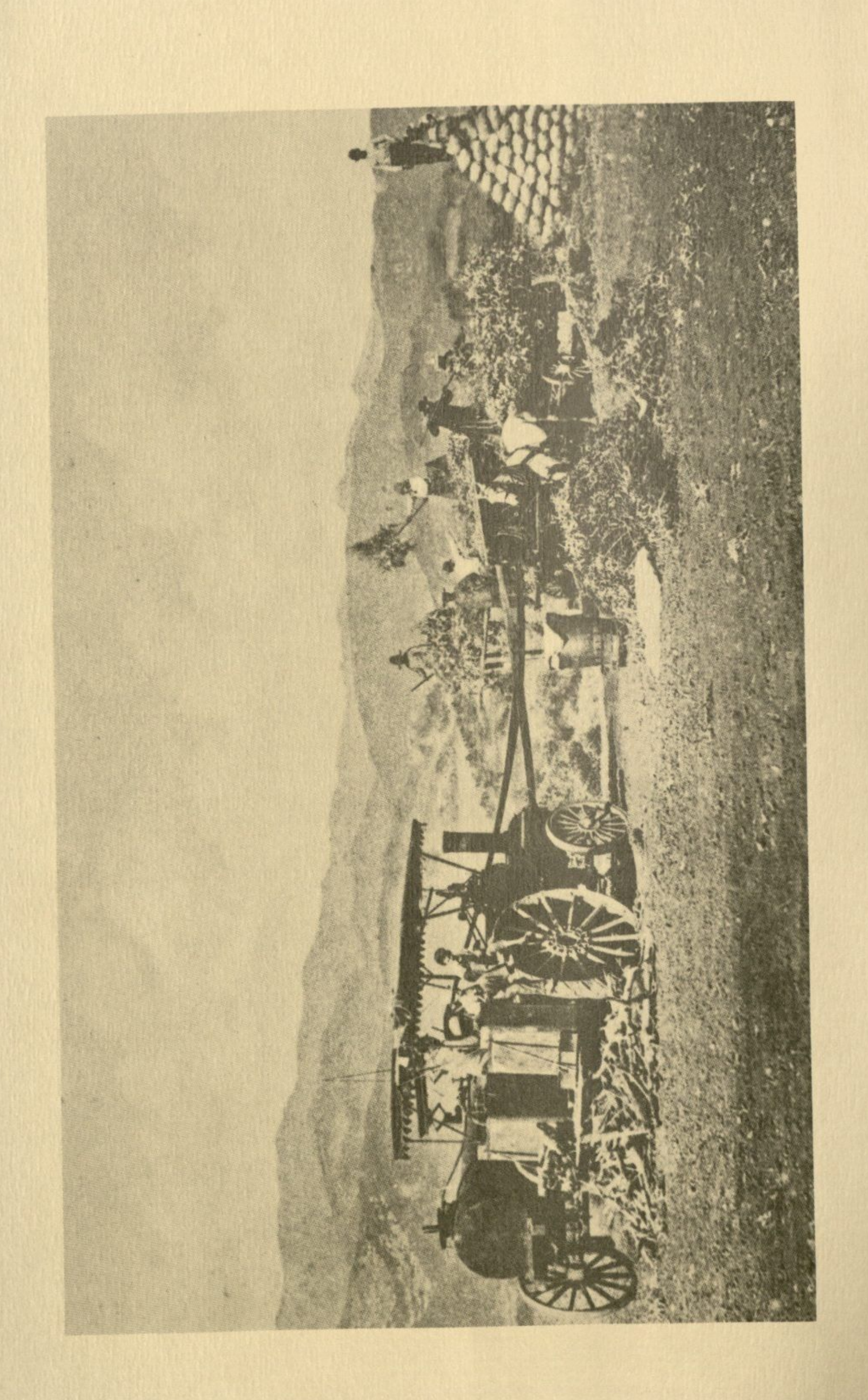


NOTICIAS



Henry Fish's Lima Beans

Vol. XXII, No. 2 Summer, 1976



THE LIMA BEAN INDUSTRY IN CARPINTERIA

By

Henry Brown

To the casual observer it might seem unlikely that Carpinteria was once the center of lima bean culture. Nothing now would suggest it unless one can look out the window at two bean threshers of the 1920's as I can here at the Rancho Laguna. Field crops have changed to nurseries, and unless one can remember the fields and warehouses, they might never have been.

The career of Henry Fish* followed the rise and fall of lima beans as Carpinteria's dominant crop. Arriving in Carpinteria in 1873, Henry stayed with the Olmstead family and, though not a farmer himself, he observed the rapid transformation of the valley as the Americans experimented with a new kind of farming—one without summer rains—that was to replace the Mexican rancho system. Stephen Olmstead had planted fifteen acres of cherries, but found that Carpinteria's winters were too mild to "put them to sleep." This lack of a definite dormant season left them indifferent when it came time to set a crop. Almonds, walnuts, apricots and citrus were being planted, and in Serena Bob McAlister planted lima beans during the 1873 and 1874 seasons. But the industry may be said to have begun in 1875 with Henry's letter to D. M. Ferry of the firm that became Ferry-Morse Seed Company of Detroit, and to have declined by the time of his retirement in 1925, when beans were being replaced by lemons, walnuts and other crops that needed irrigation. Limas went from a small novelty to a position of dominance. Without any figures to prove it, I believe it safe to say that during that time limas totalled more acreage than other crops combined, excepting hay; much hay was needed to feed the work horses and milk cows.

Ben Fish's Recollections, 1955

"Carpinteria was the place for my father, Henry, the younger brother of his family. His brothers promptly sold Henry a piece of land, the best they had. Not wanting this beloved brother to take any risks, they gave him clear title to all he could pay for and plenty of time on enough more to make a good farm. It was about sixteen years before this farm was surveyed and cut up into fifty foot lots. The surveyor, formerly the butcher's boy, was Frank F. Flournoy, who bought the first lot in 1888, the year of my birth. The farm with two others comprised the townsite, and father's house was on the central corner now Linden Avenue and State Highway 101.

"Stephen Olmstead was one of the three who owned the townsite first laid out for Carpinteria. He had been a partner of my uncle, Charles Fish, in trips across the plains. These two men lived to be past eighty when they visited together at our home. I had heard their tales of adventure which

*Mr. Brown is Henry Fish's grandson. This article was originally written for the Carpinteria Historical Society under the title "Henry Fish and the Bean Business."

would put one in mind of the travels of Jedediah Smith.

"The present Southern Pacific station is located on land formerly owned by Mrs. James Ashley, the third owner in Carpinteria townsite property. There was danger that the Carpinteria station would be located at "Old Town" about a mile northwest of the present center of Carpinteria. Sufficient space for a station would have to be contributed. This was finally given by Mrs. Ashley, but under the repeated protest, 'But it is my best corner, Mr. Fish.'

"It was in the grocery business at Fremont, Nebraska, that the seed business of D. M. Ferry & Co. first came to father's attention. Ferry had been established only a short time, but had gained the confidence of this young Nebraska grocery firm.

"So it was to D. M. Ferry & Co., of Detroit, Michigan, now Ferry-Morse Seed Company, that father wrote. And it was the clear weather at harvest time that so interested Mr. Ferry that he personally came to father's house to see about growing lima beans for seed. Mr. Ferry was perfectly at home in manner and custom as he sat in father's yard, on a log, and wrote with a pencil a contract for the planting of 200# Large White Pole Lima Beans. Then, carefully, another copy was made, and it really was a copy, as no carbon paper was available.

"In the years that followed, much effort was expended in trying to find one or another of these copies. They had to do with the history of the Ferry-Morse Seed Company, as well as the starting of father's business, and they provided the basis for the first commercial shipment of lima bean seed and probably other dried lima beans, from California (100 bushels).

"It was thought best to plant this seed on an acreage nearer the mountains [i.e., nearer than the Fish property]. This was done by an arrangement between father and Bob McAlister on property owned later by Rystrom and then by Monte Vista Dairy, or about a mile directly north of the center of Carpinteria."

Five years after Ben Fish's memoirs, Georgia Stockton wrote in her well-researched book *La Carpinteria*, "In the late 1860s Robert McAlister . . . drove into Santa Barbara to meet his brother who had come in on a sailing ship . . . Among the ports where they had loaded cargoes of hides and tallow this McAlister had seen the flat white beans at Callao, chief seaport of Peru, where they were a common commodity for ship's stores. They were called, he was told, limas, and they grew on the hilly farms surrounding the Peruvian capital. Robert McAlister ate some of the beans at dinner on board ship and when he went ashore he carried ten pounds which the cook had packed for him, which he planted in his garden. The yield was so successful that ranchers from all over the valley came to see the new bean. McAlister was generous with the seed and many other plots were sown with equally good results."

Within the next ten years Henry Fish got in touch with all the major seed companies and Carpinteria's larger farmers were all growing limas. The mild damp climate of the coast which was favorable to growing the unirrigated crops was also important at threshing time when, if the beans became too dehydrated, they could not properly be threshed because the danger of large or small cracks would ruin them as seed. It was also found that surplus stocks of seed could be held over until the following year without much deterioration, whereas in the east they would deteriorate badly in the hot summer.

In the beginning the beans were shipped by steamer from Serena or Santa Barbara. Later they were freighted by wagon to the railroad in Los Angeles and eventually to Santa Paula and Ventura as the railroad moved up the coast.

As the Santa Barbara paper of May 24, 1880, reported, ". . . everybody down there is crazy on lima beans. They have even planted beans along the roadway. Beans, Beans, Beans as far as the eye can reach. Beans enough out there . . . to make the whole city of Boston happy for years to come." Not only Boston, however, for limas were an integral part of the Carpinteria diet; indeed, during the time when Carpinteria residents were almost totally dependent on agriculture, limas were a way of life. With fresh beans in summer and dry beans boiled with ham the rest of the year, they occupied the same place in the local diet that pinto or navy beans have traditionally occupied in other places. The bulk of the production was generally of commercial or edible beans, but the Carpinteria specialty—quality seed beans grown with love and care—was what made the name "limas" synonymous with Carpinteria in the seed world, and the following letter demonstrates the dependence of the wholesale seedsman on the integrity of his grower, especially when Henry Fish still held a virtual monopoly on the trade. At the time of this letter, the railroad was expected to cross Linden Avenue at 7th Street. The location of the depot laid the groundwork for the Linden Avenue business district.

Carpinteria, Aug. 4, 1887

Messers D. M. Ferry and Co.
Detroit, Mich.

Gentlemen:

Please find enclosed report of crops. The season is favorable so far. Just at planting time land I had rented for years and depended upon was sold. That cut short my acreage and to remedy that I agreed with other growers (who had seed of mine—I knew to be pure) to furnish me any I may need to fill my contract.

In that way I had provided for all, but the crop to which I looked

for Dutch Case knife beans has failed so I will be short one half of them. Should anything occur to prevent or cut short the supply of Sevior Snall Limas, I have some of last years crop I would furnish you making due allowance.

The coming of the railroad and making their depot adjoining my land has brought such a change in values I will have to find another place to raise beans another year and I intend to be prepared to grow all you can order.

Very respectfully
Henry Fish

Harvest

The first harvests were accomplished by pulling the vines in the fall and, when they were dry, bringing them to the barn or to a round Mexican-style corral. The vines would be scattered on the floor or ground and a *vaquero* would drive mustangs or cattle around the circle. Meanwhile a man in the middle with a pitchfork would keep turning the straw. The time-honored Mexican method was replaced by horse-drawn discs and later by the steam tractor and threshing machine. Chaparral wood fired the boiler and it was an efficient operation. Henry Fish's harvest machine was one of the first, and he loaned or rented it to other growers. Juan Romero told me how shocked they were when they learned that Henry would not use or allow others to use his machine on Sundays, in spite of heavy demand or threatening weather.

The harvest was a busy time for everyone. Early in September the beans were cut by a sled dragging two knives and pulled by three horses. The beans were piled with pitch-forks and left to dry, and ideally the weather should not be too foggy or the rains too early, but too much heat or Santa Ana winds could be bad also.

Much activity and anticipation preceded the threshing, and at the proper time the thresher was put in position and the beans hauled up on wagons. The precious beans were sewed up in sacks and hauled to a safe place every night. There was the story of a farmer who came out to his threshing operation one morning to find that some sacks were missing. Tracking a suspected wagon through the dusty ground was no problem until one came to the road where other horses and wagons could make the process difficult. It happened that on this occasion one sack had a small hole in it and the jolting of the wagon caused a bean to fall out periodically along the way. The farmer was able to ignore the wagon tracks and follow a trail of beans to the proper (or improper) house.

Gleaners would go into the fields after the wagons, and Carpinteria took on an Old World aspect as the older Mexican women in long skirts and rebozos would gather scattered beans. At the age of eight I was given sacks

and sent forth to glean. My two or three sacks of pods were sent through the machine after the last wagon finished. The beans were measured and were the basis of my first bank account—$6.

When sufficient beans were ready, the warehouse was activated. This was an annual event for the community, the oldest tradition they had. A well-established hierarchy would swing into action: twenty or thirty sharp-eyed women would pick the beans by hand on a moving belt after they had been over the screens and blowers. It was an expensive process, but necessary to produce good seed. A large staff would handle the various duties in the warehouse and office, as well as related duties outside.

The farmers were paid for their beans as soon as they were cleaned and weighed, but Henry had to deliver them to the eastern companies and get his returns the following spring. This system required heavy financing and several members of his family were involved. Two of his growers, Bernard Franklin and Simeon Shephard were also finanicial backers. As the business expanded, it became necessary to finance through the bank. Because of extensive family commitments, Henry was chronically short of money, but he got some needed help when his older son Harry (Henry Berrian) took a keen interest in the business. The continuing quest for new and improved varieties gave zest to what was otherwise a routine affair on the home front. Harry's weed hoeing was interrupted in the summer of 1903 by the discovery of two unusual bush-type plants in the field of runner or vine-type beans. They were carefully saved and propagated. "My son Harry," wrote Henry Fish, "found a plant which was new to us. We went out to see it and found it so different from anything we had seen that we could not identify it . . . It was some time before I could spare enough from the seed I was saving to cook a mess and see that they had lost nothing of the choice flavor of Dreer's Bush which grows too close to the ground and is more subject to mildew. This was a stronger bush and held the pods up full from the ground. This Fordhook, like the Henderson Bush, has become so popular not only with seedsmen but also with growers, that so many were produced as to break the market. If we could find something else to grow on part of our land and not overload the market with beans, we would probably do better."

The year 1910 was a landmark year with the building of a warehouse, the first in Carpinteria, and the business became a family corporation. Henry's older sons Harry and Tom were assistant managers and daughter Hester was secretary. The third son, Ben, entered the business later. In 1912 a special train of the Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco stopped to see the valley and tour the warehouse (probably the company's finest hour) and in 1915 the seed company provided the bean display for the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

In the fall of 1916 (?) the weather was so foggy and damp that there was danger of losing the entire crop. For lack of drying breeze the beans

were rotting. Adrian (Buddy) Wood passed the time of day with Henry, and Henry remarked that when he left Nebraska he had hoped to find a place where there was something between him and the North Pole, "but I think I went too far."

At the close of the American seed trade convention in Los Angeles in 1925, some of the members came to Santa Barbara where a fiesta-type party celebrated Henry Fish's fifty years in the seed business. At 82 he stepped down from active affairs. Harry Fish continued the Carpinteria operation and later Harry's widow continued on until 1950. Carpinteria had become important in the production of green limas for eastern markets as the production of dry beans was phased out and moved to Oxnard and other coastal areas. The green limas suddenly ended with the advent of mechanical harvesting and freezing of green limas about 1947 and 1948. Fall tomatoes became an important crop and the bean house became a tomato packing plant.



I shall conclude with a poem by Frank Roberts, a warehouse stalwart in 1914 who made his apologies to Longfellow. I have revised his efforts and may my apologies to him.

The Tale of the Seasons

Near the shore of the great Pacific
Beside the S.P. track so old
In the midst of a fertile valley
Stands a building stern and bold.

There stands the warehouse deserted
The creaking rafters and beams
Speak, in accents disconsolate
To the deep-voiced ocean streams.

But where are the jolly good girls
The laughing and gay senoritas
Who picked to the tune of the cleaner
And sang to its rhythmic whirls.

But the cars of Oxnard limas
In the Fall roll up like thunder
And the Lompoc "Henderson Bush"
And Salinas "Kentucky Wonder."

And then, the final shipment
And here the care becomes great
To put all large and small orders
On the proper East-bound freight.

For naught must go wrong with the shipment
If our company's name we hold dear
And this is the tale of the seasons
As our beans go out far and near.

SANTA BARBARA'S VOLCANOES

By

Richard S. Whitehead

A volcano in Santa Barbara County? Incredible! True, we do have hot springs and earthquakes, but where are the craters, the cinder cones, the lava flows and other signs of volcanic activity? Yet one writer of County history claimed that a volcano was discovered in 1784 on the beach at a point one and a half leagues west of the Presidio of Santa Barbara: in 1927 Michael J. Phillips published a history of Santa Barbara County[1] in which he describes the discovery, concludes it was located somewhere in the vicinity of Booth's Point (the point of land at the eastern end of East Beach between the Bird Refuge and the ocean), and expresses wonder that no tradition of it has survived the passage of time and that no one has determined its precise location.

To local buffs of the history, geography, or geology of Santa Barbara County, this account offers a challenge. It does seem strange that from 1784 to 1927 no one had seen or written about such a phenomenon. A search of the writings of O'Neill, Gidney, Storke, and Thompson & West, the major historians, failed to reveal any mention of the volcano. However, such a historical research project is incomplete if it omits a review of the many volumes of the *History of California by* Hubert Howe Bancroft, first published in 1886. Such a review disclosed the origin of Phillips' information.[2]

The footnotes in Bancroft's history are a gold mine of information about early documents, many of which were destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906, but the summaries, excerpts and, in some cases, complete copies made by the scribes employed by Bancroft survived and are incorporated in the "California Archives" in the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley. By utilizing these footnotes and translating the "California Archives" documents from the Spanish, the details of the original "volcano" story can be filled in.

On September 6, 1784, Pedro Fages, governor of Alta and Baja California from July, 1782, to April, 1791, wrote a letter to Commanding General Felipe de Neve which was summarized by the scribes as follows:

> In Santa Barbara, at the edge of the beach that is halfway to Mescaltitlan, they have found an active volcano that the Indians say is very old. It is deep. It emits a thin smoke like sulfur, and when the tide comes in, it washes into its main opening, and the water seethes, so that one knows that the stones are hot.[3]

This report, made two and a half years after the Santa Barbara Presidio was founded, gave two clues to the location of the "volcano": it was on the beach, and it was halfway between Santa Barbara and Mescaltitlan. The

various diaries of the Portolá Expedition of 1769, the first land expedition along the California coast, describe an island in what is now called the Goleta Slough. At that time the island was in an *estero* entirely surrounded by brackish water, and Portolá's soldiers called it Mescaltitlan because of its similarity to another island of that name about 100 miles southeast of Mazatlan, Mexico. Today the island is just a low, barren hill at the eastern edge of the Santa Barbara airport at Goleta where the Goleta Sanitary District plant is located, but it still bears the name Mescaltitan on the U. S. Geological Survey quadrangle map of the Goleta area.

Fages' report of September 6, 1784, was acknowledged on March 2, 1785, by José Antonio Rengel who had been appointed interim Commanding General on August 21, 1784, after Neve died.[4] Rengel wrote from his headquarters at Chihuahua, about 400 miles southeast of Tucson, Arizona. Mail in those days was routed from Monterey, California, to San Blas, Mexico; thence via land routes to the northern provinces, which accounts for the six-month delay in acknowledging receipt of the letter.

More details about the "volcano" were contained in a letter dated July 3, 1785, again from Fages to the Commanding General. Bancroft's document reads:

> It is said that walking a league and a half (about 4 miles) to the west from the Presidio of Santa Barbara, on the same beach, a bend or angle was found that alters the alignment of the cliff that faces the sea. It must be a thousand varas (about a half mile) in circumference, so that one knows that the same fire has brought down the cliff. Throughout this site, the ground is so hot that one cannot approach it; it burns continuously in more than thirty places, like geysers that exude dense smoke. From its stench it appears to be from sulfur, which in fact, it really is. It is believed that this is the material that most feeds the fire. A vein of that material, mixed with others of various colors, is observed. The vein goes under the top layer of good soil that produces the same ground cover as the other lands, and as it burns underneath, the cliff tumbles in. The fragments and a kind of thick ash or cinder from what has already burned and which the surf heaps or piles up (on the beach) plugs the main opening so that one cannot tell where it is. Recently, the substances that they observe there are sulfur and asphaltum, a sort of tar; the rest of the mixture is of various colors and is unrecognized. Returning to the Presidio, a gunshot before arriving, they saw a patch of yellow soil of about twenty varas (in circumference) somewhat moist and without ground cover. Poking around a little, one can see that it is the same seam, with a worse odor, but it is not burning.[5]

Some additional information has been gleaned by going to the source of the historical account. We know that the "volcano" was about four miles west of the site of the Santa Barbara Presidio, which is located at the intersection of Santa Barbara and Canon Perdido Streets. Michael J. Phillips had erroneously located the "volcano" somewhere east of Santa Barbara in the vicinity of Booth's Point, or on the coast within the next mile below.

In 1784 the route followed to reach the "volcano" probably would have been by way of what is now City College and along the Santa Barbara Mesa. By this route, four miles from the Presidio would be at a point about a half mile west of Arroyo Burro Beach State Park. In the 1790's and early 1800's the soldiers of the Santa Barbara Presidio and the padres of the Mission made many expeditions out from Santa Barbara to explore surrounding territory and to pursue their objectives of settling the country and Christianizing the Indians. On these trips they had no way of measuring accurately how far they had traveled; distances were estimated from the number of hours of travel. If the terrain was smooth, they might average as much as four miles per hour; if rough, as little as one mile. Thus the one and a half leagues from the Presidio could have been considerably in error.

Eight years after the report submitted by Fages, a naturalist and surgeon named José Longinos Martinez made an expedition from Mexico up into Alta California and wrote a journal of his travels. In it he tells of having seen a "fire volcano" on the coast between Santa Barbara and La Purisima Mission (at Lompoc). There is little doubt that it is the same as that reported by Fages. He writes:

> The singular thing about it is that when the sea is rough and it is covered by water and high tide, then are its eruptions of fire and ashes the greater—so much so that one can observe it only from a distance. Even after an eruption, the ground is so covered with ashes that one cannot approach it without being half-buried. I was able to observe the craters only because the wind blew (the smoke away) and the tide had receded. The craters were varnished with sticky pitch mixed with sulphur, alum and other substances. The ground all about the circumference was so hot that one could not remain standing half a minute without getting the soles of his feet burned. Small flames issued from the mouth from time to time, together with smoke so sulphurous that I could not breathe and was forced to abandon the place before I wished. All that day and the day following I suffered from a violent cough that gave me some concern . . . A spectator witnessing its violence would say that all the waters of the sea would not suffice to extinguish it; but Naturalists, perceiving that the principal agent of these eruptions is water, and that without it the fire does not become active, know that its

activity depends upon the amount of sea water that washes into it. This is a natural effect and one that astonished the natives very much.[6]

On January 14, 1813, the Comandante of the Santa Barbara Presidio, José Dario Argüello, wrote to Governor José Joaquin de Arrillaga submitting a report on the destructive earthquake of December 12, 1812.[7] The Presidio was severely damaged (as were the missions of Santa Barbara, Santa Ines, La Purisima and others), and the tremors were still continuing. Unfortunately Bancroft's scribe did not copy the description of damage in detail. On March 19, 1813, Argüello wrote that "the volcano near the coast developed more openings, and another one is said to exist on the other side of the summit, Pine Mountain. It is concluded from this that the asphalt together with the sulphur has not ceased boiling in the center of this undermined soil.[8]

When these devastating earthquakes occurred in 1812 and 1813, the only structures of any consequence in Santa Barbara that could be damaged were the Presidio and the Mission. The houses of the natives, hemispherical huts made of reeds and thatch, must have swayed with the earth during the tremors and remained relatively undamaged. Gradually, however, the plain began to be settled by retired soldiers and an influx of Yankee traders and others attracted to the community because of its climate or the opportunity to amass a fortune from the trading of goods and the shipment of hides, tallow and otter skins. By 1826 the community was large enough to warrant an order by Governor Echeandia establishing the first *ayuntamiento* or town government. This order changed governmental control from military to civil, capable of handling the problems of a potentially urban area and setting the stage for incorporation of the city. On April 9, 1850, five months before California was admitted to the Union, the city was incorporated by act of the California legislature.

One of the new city's first acts was to have a survey made and city streets laid out to enable the citizens to travel about. At the same time the U. S. Government was preparing accurate maps of the coast, utilizing the facilities of the U. S. Coast Survey (later the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey) to enable ships to sail safely up and down the coast. In 1870 a detailed map of the coast was published[9] showing topography inland from the beach for a distance of up to two miles between Santa Barbara and Goleta. A section of this map shows "Arroyo del Burro," the creek that borders La Cumbre Shopping Center on the east. At its mouth is the small lagoon, now a part of Arroyo Burro Beach State Park. A little over a half mile west of the lagoon the map shows a landslip extending a distance of 1700 feet parallel to the shoreline and inland a distance of some 500 feet. At this point the top of the cliff has dropped about 100 feet. The depression is marked *El Argulie.* A thorough search of several good Spanish dictionaries failed to elicit the meaning of



Portion of U.S. Coast Survey Map, 1870

this term. Fr. Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., archivist at Santa Barbara Mission and the highest authority in this area on translations of archaic Spanish documents, expressed doubt that it was a Spanish word because of its spelling. The answer to this puzzle was found in an account written by John P. Harrington, the noted anthropologist who excavated the Indian village at Burton Mound adjacent to Cabrillo Boulevard and spent years developing the vocabulary of the Chumash Indians. The account describes a trip with his Chumash informant, Juan Justo, to the vicinity of Arroyo Burro and Hope Ranch. This trip was probably made in the early 1920's.

Harrington was a meticulous etymologist who painstakingly spelled out phonetically every Chumash word he heard. Of this trip he wrote:

> I asked informant at once about the place where the cliff was hot part way up. Informant stated with no hesitation that that place was *ajuluwil une. Informant* gave it this way for two or three times but later gave it distinctly as *juluwil une.* Aside from the presence or absence of an initial *a* the word gave no trouble phonetically . . . We took the road from the mouth of the Arroyo Burro to the mouth of Hope Ranch arroyo—the new road which leads along the shore. Just before reaching the Hope Ranch gate, informant called my attention to a *llano* [flat area] which was like a step between the cliff and the beach and just opposite where we were. He stated that the *llano* [that whole *llano*] was *juluwil une,* and that the whole *llano* or locality burns and smoke rises. An old trail (for foot-goers and horseback riders) used to descend to this flat from the upcoastward side, informant stated. The flat appeared to be about half-way in elevation between the height of the beach and that of the top of the cliff where we were. I did not take time to get a good look at the flat. We next paid the man at the gate fifty cents for permission to enter Hope Ranch.[10]

It seems quite probable that when the survey for the 1870 map was being made the surveyors were told the Indian name for the landslip above the "volcano." Since a *j* in Spanish is pronounced like an exaggerated *h*, and a *g* is somewhat similar, surveyors probably thought the name for the landslip was Spanish and spelled it out as best they could, coming up with *El Argulie.*

An intensive study of the "volcano" phenomenon was made in 1886 by Professor Henry Chapman Ford. Ford is well known for his etchings of California missions, but his interests and talents were varied: in addition to being an artist, he was a naturalist and a vice-president of the Santa Barbara Society of Natural History, predecessor of the present Museum of Natural History. In October, 1890, he wrote an article entitled "Solfataras in the Vicinity of Santa Barbara," published in Volume 1, No. 2 of the

transactions of the Society. Apparently for the first time, he identified the eruptions as "fire wells" or *solfataras*. Curiously, he does not describe the one near Arroyo Burro, but two others: one on the San Marcos Ranch in the Santa Ynez Valley (probably that noted after the earthquake of 1812) and one on the Ventura County side of Rincon Creek. He stated:

> It may be hardly proper to apply the name *solfatara* to these gaseous issues, yet they have many characteristics of those outlets of internal action situated near active volcanoes. If not rightly coming under that head, they may belong to the class of gas-springs known as fire wells, so called from the emanations of carbureted hydrogen, occasionally taking fire at the issue. These phenomena can undoubtedly be traced to deep-seated chemical changes. Dr. Dauberry attributed them in Sicily to the slow combustion of beds of sulphur. Another authority states that the frequent occurrence of naptha and inflammable gas points to the engagement of hydrogen carbons from subterranean strata.
>
> The recent discovery of natural gas by boring at Summerland, a few miles west of the Rincon issues, where it has no doubt been escaping from the surface for a long period, together with the "fire wells" described, indicates that the hydrocarbons are abundantly generated in the strata underlying a considerable portion of Santa Barbara County, and that this valuable product may soon be obtained in sufficient quantities to be utilized for a host of purposes where a cheap fuel or lighting is required.[11]

Ford describes the San Marcos Ranch "fire well" as being 75 to 100 feet in diameter and bare of vegetation. The atmosphere in the locality was permeated by a "strong and intensely disagreeable odor, characterized evidently by bitumen and sulfur." Visible sulfurous fumes rose to a height of from two to three feet from eight or ten apertures in the ground, and the gases were too hot for the hand to bear. During the cooler days of winter, the fumes rose to much greater heights and were visible at a considerable distance. The ground was an outcrop of light-colored shales in a nearly vertical stratification, and disturbance of the shale with a pick uncovered areas very warm to the touch. At the apertures sublimed crystals of sulfur were noted.

The warm ground at that season attracted the cattle, numbers of them seeking the neighborhood for their nightly bed. At the time of Ford's visit, the surface was strewn with grasshoppers that had died either from the heat or the deleterious gases.

Ford's account was shown to S. A. Nash-Boulden, manager of the San Fernando Rey Ranch, part of the original San Marcos Rancho. Mr. Nash-Boulden was supervisor of Los Padres National Forest from 1929 to 1946,

and his house is located on the edge of a high bluff overlooking a portio of the Santa Ynez River. On reading the account, he said there was on location adjacent to the river on the San Marcos Rancho that fitted th description, and that was a few hundred yards down river from his hous and visible from his living room window.

Ford also described a "fire well" "about three-fourths of a mile belo a point where Rincon Creek enters the sea and near the carriage road an railway leading from Santa Barbara to Ventura." He said that at this poi the normally light-colored shales have been altered by the action of miner gases and great heat, nearly all shades of red, yellow, brown and, in son cases, green being represented. He followed a path that took him to a poi about 300 feet above the base of the cliff, where he noted the same disagre able odor that existed around the Santa Ynez Valley issue. Descending abo twenty or thirty feet, he found hot gases bursting from numerous apertur in the shales, accompanied in some cases by melted bitumen that hardened cooling. Crystals of sulfur had formed on all nearby objects and the odo were extremely disagreeable. He wrote:

> During the cooler months, as at the Santa Ynez locality, the gases arising from the principal orifices are seen from distant points, and the issue of so much smoke and accompanying heat has given rise to a popular idea that it is due to volcanic action. The local journals have from time to time given voice to this idea, and the frequency of earthquake shocks in the neighborhood has been attributed to the struggling efforts of the "Rincon Volcano."
>
> When the excavations of the Southern Pacific railway were made at a point a mile farther west from the locality just described, a similar issue was discovered, and upon touching a match to the gas, combustion ensued and continued, notwithstanding vigorous efforts which were made to extinguish it. The fumes caused much annoyance to the laborers, and not until masses of earth were dumped over the orifice did it cease to burn.[11]

In July, 1834, one José Maria Garcia wrote a report on a trip tak from San Fernando Mission in the San Fernando Valley to La Purisi Mission at Lompoc in which he described the ranches, missions and set ments along the route. He wrote that upon leaving Ventura

> The road to the West goes along the beach and edge of the sea, without being able to proceed in any other way for a distance of some 5 leagues, because all this stretch consists of high and impassable hills. On the crest or tip (of these hills) there is a sulfur volcano in which there has never been noted a violent or harmful explosion.[12]

Charles Outland, noted historian and author of a fascinating book entitled *Stagecoaching on El Camino Real* described the problems of travelers on stagecoaches plying the road between Ventura and Santa Barbara. After describing some of the hazards of travel along the road west of Ventura, which at that time ran along the beach, he writes:

> Runaways through the surf were not the only sources of excitement on the Rincon during the heyday of Coast Line staging. A short distance below Rincon Point is a natural phenomenon known to science as a *solfatara,* but more familiarly called a "volcano" by the hoi polloi. For a decade and a half during the 1870's and 80's the "Rincon Volcano" was quite active at intervals. It became the not unwilling duty of the stagecoach drivers to investigate and submit impromptu reports upon the current status of the hot vent when arriving in San Buenaventura or Santa Barbara. The *Ventura Free Press* of July 2, 1881, reported that J. C. Cheney, a regular whip on the Santa Barbara run had brought cinders from the volcano into town and placed them on display in Cody's Drug Store. Cheney related that the surrounding rocks were getting hotter each day and were already untouchable. *Free Press* Editor McLean went on to state that "if the heat keeps increasing, there will be a veritable volcano there shortly, and then the Santa Barbara papers will swear it was gotten up expressly as an attraction to summer tourists."
>
> By October 27, 1883, the stage drivers could report that flames ten feet high were issuing from the volcano, and rocks were being hurled into the air. The situation was not quite so funny by then, but it was probably sheer coincidence that McLean sold the *Free Press* at the same time.
>
> The disturbances on the Rincon soon subsided into an occasional flareup of smoke, a situation that would continue long after the demise of the stagecoach. It was possibly the sighting of the flames, however, that resulted in a Santa Barbara lawyer remarking to fellow passengers on the stage that he would rather live in hell than in Ventura. The Ventura newspapers agreed that hell was a much more suitable place for Santa Barbara lawyers than San Buenaventura.[13]

In the *Pacific Coast Pilot for 1889 for California, Oregon and Washington,* published by the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, is the comment:

> Fifteen miles westward of San Buenaventura there is reported to be a rich deposit of sulfur on the shore, surface specimens yielding 60%. Around the locality are found ashes and scoria; the ground is hot, and gas emitted is almost suffocating.

In early 1946 the writer of this article left Santa Barbara early on a cold morning for a trip to Los Angeles. One mile below Rincon Creek, the boundary line between Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, smoke or steam was seen issuing from a point possibly 100 feet below the top of the cliff. Today the point of issue can be identified by the pinkish-red color of the shale in contrast with the normal yellow-buff color of the rest of the cliff.

In 1963 a subdivision of property located on top of the cliff near the shore in the west end of Goleta Valley was delayed for months while a bulldozer graded a pond large enough to hold water that eventually extinguished a burning "fire well." How long it had burned or how it was ignited was unknown.

Returning to the Arroyo Burro *solfatara*, the quest for information about its exact location was ended by Cliff Smith, the genial librarian and botanist of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History who has an intimate knowledge of this county's flora, fauna, and geography. Following his directions, the site of the *solfatara* was found by driving to Arroyo Burro Beach State Park and walking west along the beach toward Hope Ranch about a half mile to a place where the shale in the face of the cliff has a pinkish-red color. Here, for a distance of about a quarter mile, the top of the bluff has sunk about a hundred feet below the level of the surrounding land. At the bottom of the cliff, adjacent to the sandy beach, the soil has an ashy quality and readily crumbles to a fine dust. Some thirty or forty feet above the beach is an area that has not been burned red and which contains a shale stone that appears to be impregnated with oil. This is *El Argulie*. But there is no heat or fire.

Oren Sexton, manager of the La Cumbre Mutual Water Company that serves Hope Ranch, provided the reason why the "volcano" is extinct. He explained that by 1920 the fire then burning within the boundaries of Hope Ranch had became a nuisance to surrounding property owners because of odor, smoke, inquisitive visitors and the threat of grass fire. In the early 1920's the owners of Hope Ranch had a pipeline constructed to the site, graded a levee to impound the water, and created a pond which, after several weeks, allowed the water to percolate far enough into the ground to drown the flames. Thus was extinguished one of Santa Barbara's oldest and most curious phenomena, a fire that had burned for centuries.

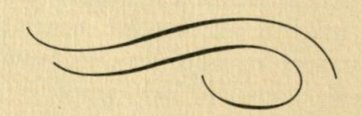
Edward Selden Spaulding, who encouraged the writer to undertake the research for this article, recalls reading the log of some ship plying the coastal waters of California. The log indicated that on the southbound trip, the plume of smoke and steam from the "fire well" served as a landmark indicating the ship's approach to the Santa Barbara roadstead.

The writer wishes to acknowledge with sincere thanks the help and cooperation of those who made this article possible: the assistance of Fr.

Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., archivist at Santa Barbara Mission, Edward Selden Spaulding, author of several books on local history, Clif Smith, librarian and botanist at the Museum of Natural History, and Ike Bonilla, local historian, is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks are also due to Mrs. Ruth Adams, Mrs. Robert C. Smitheram, and Mr. Henry Schewel for their translations of Bancroft Library documents from archaic Spanish to English. The author also appreciates the cooperation of the Arthur H. Clarke Company for permission to quote from *Stagecoaching on El Camino Real* by Charles Outland. And last, but not least, the writer wishes to thank Mrs. Muriel Fuller for cheerfully donating her time to editing and typing the manuscript of this article.

NOTES

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VOLUNTEER STAFF NEEDED

Staffers are needed to assist the ladies at Fernald House and the Trussell-Winchester Adobe on Sunday afternoons from two to four o'clock. For further information about this important and interesting work, please call Mrs. Gene Harris, Chairman of the Woman's Projects House Committee, at 962-4738.

IN MEMORIAM
W. EDWIN GLEDHILL

In memory of W. Edwin Gledhill, director emeritus of the Society and founder of the Gledhill Library, who died in February of this year, the following resolution was read before the Board of Directors of the Society at its meeting of February 26, 1976.

WHEREAS, this Board has received with a deep feeling of sadness the news of the death of W. Edwin Gledhill, Director Emeritus; and

WHEREAS, during his term as Director of the Santa Barbara Historical Society, he was a leader in the field of historic preservation and through his foresight, dedication, and artistic ability brought recognition to the Society as an outstanding and scholarly institution; and

WHEREAS, many of the important books and manuscripts in our Library were acquired through Mr. Gledhill's efforts, it is therefore most appropriate that his name should be perpetuated through the Gledhill Library here at the Santa Barbara Historical Society; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gledhill will be remembered for many things not the least of which is the writing of Santa Barbara's El Pueblo Viejo Ordinance, which paved the way for legal protection for adobes and other historic buildings; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gledhill was a leader in many diversified civic and cultural activities which have greatly benefited the City and County of Santa Barbara and the State of California; and

WHEREAS, the passing of Mr. Gledhill has saddened the members of this Board,

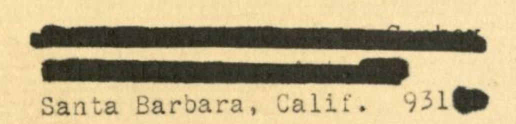
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors of the Santa Barbara Historical Society express its deep sorrow and sense of loss upon the passing of its Director Emeritus; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that it share with W. Edwin Gledhill's family their sorrow; and

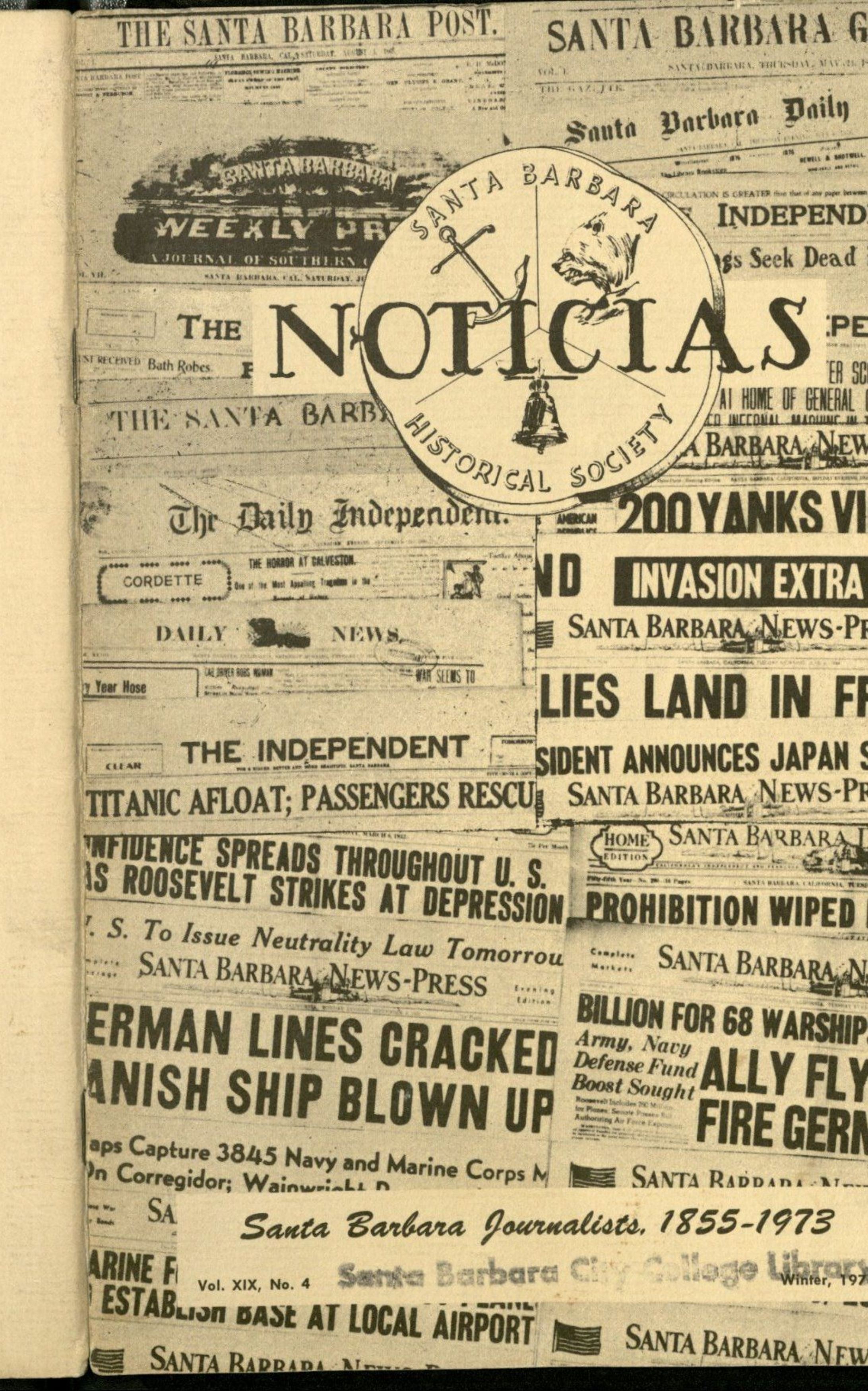
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution be spread upon the minutes of this meeting of the Board of Directors, Thursday, February 26, 1976, and that a copy of this Resolution be sent to Mr. Gledhill's family; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that when this Board adjourns, it adjourn in loving memory of W. Edwin Gledhill.

QUARTERLY BULLETIN
OF THE
SANTA BARBARA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
136 EAST DE LA GUERRA STREET
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93101



[redacted]
Santa Barbara, Calif. 931[redacted]


THE SANTA BARBARA POST.
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SANTA BARBARA WEEKLY PR
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ALLY FLY
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On Corregidor; Wainwright
Santa Barbara Journalists, 1855-1973
Vol. XIX, No. 4
Winter, 197
ESTABLISH BASE AT LOCAL AIRPORT
SANTA BARBARA NEW

the paper was doomed. It managed to limp along without ads until its Christmas issue of 1858, at which time V. Torras and P. Fossas bought the plant and shipped the equipment to San Francisco.

The one faded spot in the otherwise bright tapestry of Santa Barbara's recorded history is the period between 1858, when the **Gazette** expired, and May 30, 1868, when E. B. Boust of Placerville issued the first edition of the Santa Barbara **Post.**[3] During that ten-year hiatus the town was without a newspaper and much fugitive history was lost.

Boust was a radical Secessionist. Like his predecessors on the **Gazette,** he bruised the feelings of Spanish-speaking Barbarenos with his editorial jibes that Californians were discouraging American immigration and impeding development in Santa Barbara County. After one abrasive year, Boust sold the **Post** to the Rev. Joseph A. Johnson.[4]

Johnson was a fire-and-brimstone Protestant minister who, in 1866, had had the temerity to introduce Congregationalist heresy to an overwhelmingly Papist community. Now, backed by the financial subsidy of Santa Barbara's wealthiest citizen, Col. W. W. Hollister, the Rev. Johnson forsook the pulpit in favor of the editorial desk.

He dropped the controversial **"Post"** from the masthead, renaming the paper the Santa Barbara **Press.** The first issue under Johnson's editorship appeared on June 14, 1869.

EDITOR HORSE-WHIPPED ON STATE STREET

Editor Johnson was not long in establishing himself as the stormy petrel of Santa Barbara journalism. When he criticized the district attorney, W. T. Wilson, for consorting with unsavory characters, Wilson called Johnson "a dirty presumptuous dog and a slanderer" and, meeting Johnson on State Street, knocked him down and lashed him unmercifully with a whip. "Served Johnson right" was the concensus of the citizenry.

Editor Johnson engaged in numerous brouhahas in Santa Barbara. A favorite target of his journalistic javelins was E. B. Boust, his predecessor, who was finally goaded beyond endurance and returned to the newspaper field with a rebuttal sheet, the **Times,** on February 1, 1870.

Since Johnson was being financed by Col. Hollister, Boust accused the former clergyman of being in sycophancy to the wishes of the rich and turning an unfriendly eye upon the laboring classes, "a lick-spittle of the lowest type" who ran a newspaper, in Boust's words, "owned by a clan of land-grabbers."[5] This was a veiled reference to the Mores, Dibblees and Hollisters who had been buying up vast acreages of cheap land in the Lompoc, Goleta and Santa Clara River valleys.

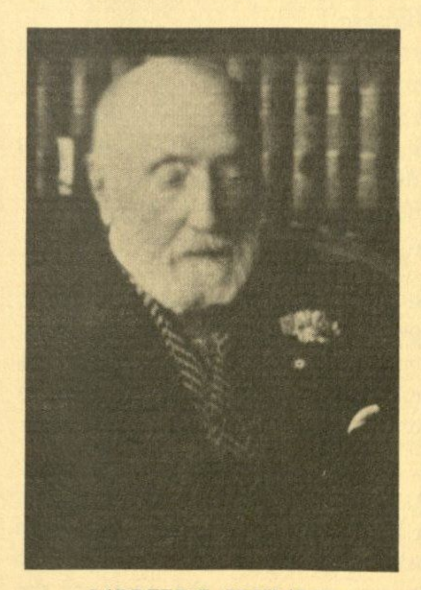
Early in the morning of August 25, 1871, an unidentified arsonist set fire to Johnson's shop. Editor Boust snidely suggested that perhaps Johnson had set the fire himself in order to collect insurance.[6]

Shortly thereafter Boust sold the Santa Barbara **Times** to a young attorney, Jarrett T. Richards, who had bought out Judge Charles Fernald's

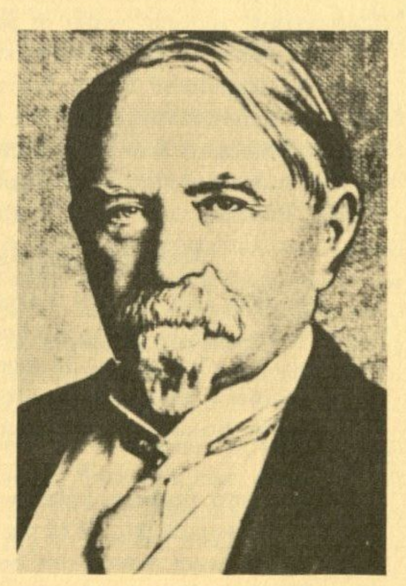
practice. (His law firm is still in business in 1973 under the name of Price, Postel and Parma.)[7]

At that time Col. Hollister's pet crusade was obtaining a federal subsidy for an Atlantic & Pacific Railroad with a terminus in Santa Barbara, a project which was vigorously supported by the **Press.** When editor Richards came out against the railroad, Johnson dismissed his competitor as an "impudent young knave".

Starting as a semi-weekly in 1871, by July 1873 the **Times** had become a full-fledged daily, although the **Press** on July 24, 1873, referred to it contemptuously as a "rag".



JARRETT T. RICHARDS
An early-day editor



HARRISON GRAY OTIS
A Santa Barbara failure

The **Press,** the Republican voice of Santa Barbara, was first issued as a weekly, but on September 9, 1872, it celebrated California's 22nd Admission Day by becoming a daily. Johnson charged $16 a column for standing ads, and boasted 3,000 circulation, although many of the subscribers paid with firewood to fuel the boiler of the steam engine which powered the flatbed press.

By September 27, 1872, the **Press** was able to buy a new drum cylinder press, and on October 25, 1872, Johnson leased the wire services of the new Overland Telegraph, which for the first time gave Santa Barbarans New York news the same day it happened, and European dispatches only a day late. At this time the format was enlarged from three to six columns.

Continuing to prosper, on April 3, 1873, the **Press** moved into a new brick building at 26 West Ortega Street near State. The opening was mark-

ed by a fund-raising banquet sponsored by John P. Stearns, the wharfinger, at which a purse of $1,925 in gold was presented to editor Johnson in appreciation of his contributions to Santa Barbara life.[8]

Contemporaneously a member of the faculty of Santa Barbara College at State and Anapamu streets, Charles A. Storke, had resigned to establish the **Herald** in Los Angeles, using money supplied by his wealthy father-in-law, T. Wallace More, one of the aforementioned Yankee "land-grabbers". Unfortunately for Storke, the Panic of 1873 forced him to sell out inside of a year. He returned to Santa Barbara to study land law and opened a practice in 1895, although later he was also to make his mark as a controversial editorial writer in Santa Barbara.[9]

The Panic of 1873 also ruined Jarrett T. Richards. The **Times** wound up being assimilated by the **Press.** Editor Johnson, with unconcealed glee, informed Santa Barbara that the demise of the **Times** was a blessing, adding that "Richards is an ass, as stupid as he is brazen, with no more regard for his own word than the people of Santa Barbara now have." Nevertheless, Richards went on to a distinguished legal career.

SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS APPEAR IN 1870s

The first half of the Seventies saw several newspapers take root, blossom and die in Santa Barbara. One, the **Tribune,** was published for two years by a precocious twelve-year-old, Earle A. Walcott, as a vehicle for his mother's florid poetry. (The only known copy of the Santa Barbara **Tribune** is in the collections of the California Historical Society in San Francisco.)[10]

The Santa Barbara **Index** was an attractive and well-edited paper, founded on August 31, 1872 by E. N. Wood and A. W. Sefton. Its two inside pages were filled with boilerplate advertising from San Francisco firms. The **Index's** avowed **raison d'etre** was to espouse the cause of the Democratic Party, to counteract Johnson's blatant Republicanism. Thus, the **Index** in the 1872 presidential election supported Greeley, while the **Press** backed the victorious Grant.

After several changes of ownership, the **Index** was acquired by Mr. and Mrs. William Russell on January 22, 1874. At that time the spiritualism fad was sweeping the country, with Mrs. Russell its Santa Barbara priestess. As a consequence, the **Index** was in a position to supply exclusive news coverage of the spooky goings-on at local seances, making it more readable than the staid **Press.**[11]

A combination of the economically disastrous Drought of 1877 and Russell's untimely death that same year forced the **Index** to fold.

On May 1, 1875, Al Pettygrove started the Santa Barbara **Daily News** (the first of two papers bearing that name) and within sixty days was boasting that he had passed the **Press** in advertising lineage and circulation.[12] However, slightly more than a year later, on May 16, 1876, the

Press took over the **News** like a shark swallowing a tuna. Pettygrove made another try with the **Daily Advertiser**, but it managed to publish only from February to November, 1877.

The Santa Barbara **Daily Morning Republican** flashed like a comet across the journalistic horizon of Santa Barbara in 1875, under the editorship of A. S. Winchester, lasting only from May to August.[13]

1875 saw Johnson's erstwhile competitor, Jarrett T. Richards, become mayor of Santa Barbara. When Richards supported the candidacy of one Clarence Gray for district attorney, Johnson denounced the mayor in such vitriolic terms that a group of concerned citizens, including Johnson's own sponsor, Col. Hollister, signed a petition requesting him to make a public retraction of his charges.

The chastened Johnson confessed he had overstepped, but refused to sign an apology which Richards had composed. This resulted in a fist fight which the city marshal broke up. A blow-by-blow account of the bout was gleefully reported by the **Daily News.**[14]

This contretemps prompted the **San Francisco Alta** to editorialize "Santa Barbara would be very dull without Johnson, editor of the **Press.** He keeps a show of life there by his frisky editorials." The Los Angeles **Star** praised Johnson as "one of the most indomitable, energetic and successful editors on the Pacific Coast. No man has done so much as he to make Santa Barbara the delightful and refined city it is."[15]

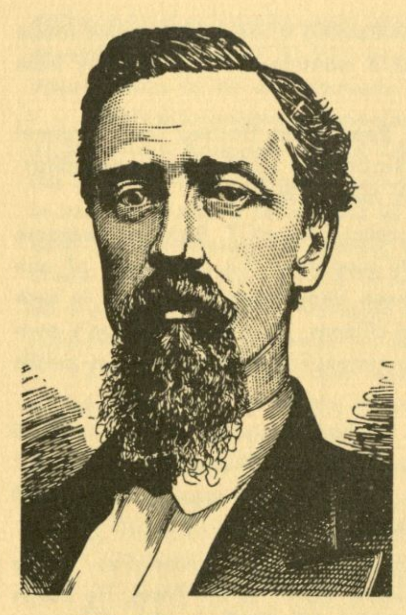
Johnson's grand dream was to produce a monthly pictorial magazine for national distribution, to extol Santa Barbara's civic virtues to all America. He succeeded in bringing out a prototype issue dated September 10, 1875, as a supplement to the **Press,** but it consisted of only eight pages and sixteen steel engravings.

The abortive magazine venture was prohibitively expensive, and in the end proved to be Johnson's swan song. He quarreled with Hollister over budget matters, Hollister withdrew his financial support, and Johnson perforce had to leave Santa Barbara in search of employment.

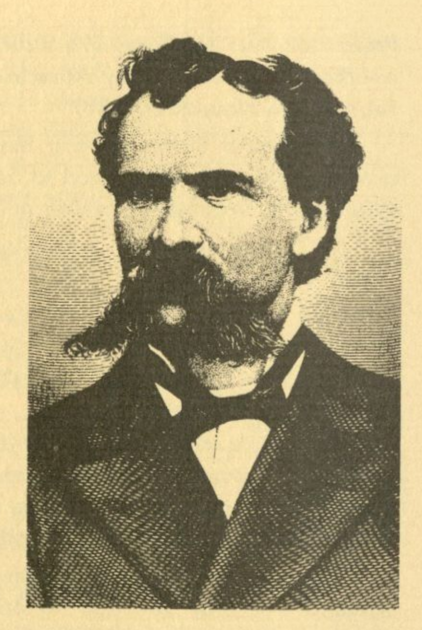
COL. HOLLISTER IMPORTS HARRISON G. OTIS

Hollister replaced the controversial ex-preacher with a fire-eating journalist and Civil War hero, Harrison Gray Otis. Destined to become one of the West Coast's greatest newspapermen, Otis assumed the editorship of the **Press** on March 11, 1876. However, he fell into the same trap as previous editors in Santa Barbara — he began blaming the lazy ways of the natives for the town's economic stagnation.[16]

Shortly after Otis' arrival, two editors out of the past, E. B. Boust of the defunct **Post** and W. B. Keep of **Gazette** memory, founded the Santa Barbara **Democrat.** It was soon acquired by Fred A. Moore, who changed the name to the Santa Barbara **Independent.**



THEODORE M. GLANCEY
A victim of murder



C. F. McGLASHAN
A "peaceful" editor

Running warfare developed between Otis and the **Independent.** After four treadmilling years, Otis tired of small town life and quit in February, 1880. (Two years later he invested in the embryonic Los Angeles **Times,** which he developed into the southland's premier daily. Otis was the leading citizen of Los Angeles when he died in 1917.)

Otis' successor as editor of the **Press,** R. D. Bogart, kept the paper afloat through the summer of 1880, before being forced to suspend publication, both of the daily and the auxiliary **Weekly Press.**

Col. Hollister had too many other irons in the fire to worry about his moribund newspaper holdings, so he sold the **Press** to John P. Stearns, builder of Stearns Wharf, in the fall of 1880.[17]

Stearns brought in an Illinois editor, Theodore M. Glancey, to run the **Press.** Glancey had served as editor of C. A. Storke's Los Angeles **Herald** seven years before.

One of Glancey's first editorials concerned the perennial candidacy of Clarence Gray for county district attorney. Glancey's investigative reporting uncovered several cases where Gray had threatened people with loaded guns, or beaten them, including a defenseless Catholic priest whom Gray had clubbed into insensibility over some fancied slight.

Glancey informed **Press** readers that Gray's nomination was a disgrace and that public officials should not be chosen from among paranoiac hoodlums and common lawbreakers.

Gray reacted with apoplectic rage. He sought out publisher Stearns in the office of Judge D. P. Hatch and demanded to know if Stearns approved of Glancey's slanderous editorial. Stearns declared emphatically that he did, and Gray slunk out. Next day, however, he encountered Glancey at State and Haley Streets and promptly drew his pistol.

The unarmed editor grappled with his assailant but could not seize the latter's weapon. Attempting to retreat inside the nearby Occidental Hotel, Glancey reached the doorway when Gray shot him in the back. Mortally wounded, Glancey staggered up the plank sidewalk as far as the Morris House at State and Cota. Doctors called to aid the fallen editor heard him whisper that he was "dying for a principle and would not change the editorial" if he could. Glancey expired shortly afterward.

After three murder trials, Gray was acquitted in December 1882 in San Mateo, in what was widely deplored as a miscarriage of justice.[18]

Stearns, lacking an editor, sold the **Morning Press** before the end of 1880 to C. F. McGlashan, noted as the author of a book on the ill-fated Donner Party, and inventor of a railway telegraph system.

McGlashan's biographer, Jesse Diamond Mason, in 1883 noted that McGlashan restored an atmosphere of calm and dignity to Santa Barbara journalism, which had become saturated with violence and bitterness.

"The readers of the papers had become used to it," Mason wrote. "They were not alarmed or frightened in the least by the terrible fusillade of paper bullets. It was even thought that they rather enjoyed it . . . Mr. McGlashan demonstrated the contrary. He has abused no one. Uniform courtesy has marked his editorials . . . Mr. McGlashan judged rightly that a clean, respectable sheet would be supported."[19]

Another journalist who also subscribed to the doctrine of peaceful co-existence was George P. Tebbetts, a '49er from Massachusetts who had struck it rich on the Mother Lode and moved to San Diego. He appeared in Santa Barbara in 1883 to purchase the **Independent** following the death of its editor and publisher, Fred A. Moore.[20]

Tebbetts converted the **Independent** from a weekly into a daily on May 1, 1883, to usher in what in retrospect was the golden age of journalism in Santa Barbara, insofar as numbers of papers was concerned.

TWO DAILIES, FOUR WEEKLIES GOING AT ONCE

As of 1888, for example, Santa Barbara had a choice of two dailies and four weeklies: the **Daily Independent,** managed by Tebbetts with M.C.F. Hall-Wood as editor; the **Daily Press,** by then under the control of Walter H. Nixon; the **Weekly Press,** a digest of the daily; the **Weekly Independent,** also a Tebbetts enterprise; the **Weekly Herald,** a well-edited sheet by Felix Lane and S. W. Candy; and the **Weekly Bugle,** dedicated to furthering the interests of the Prohibition Party.

Tebbetts lost the **Independent** for a paltry $2,500 debt during the Panic of 1893, but soon established another paper which revived the old name of **Daily News,** hiring Frank Sands to run it for him. Tebbetts died in 1907 at the San Francisco home of his son Nathan.

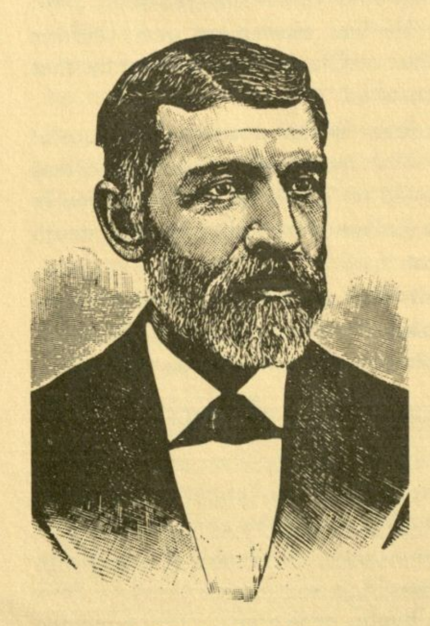
The mortgage holder who foreclosed Tebbett''s **Independent,** a man named LaViece, hired historian C. M. Gidney as his editor. LaViece died in 1900 and the **Independent** was put on the market.

THOMAS M. STORKE MAKES HIS ENTRANCE

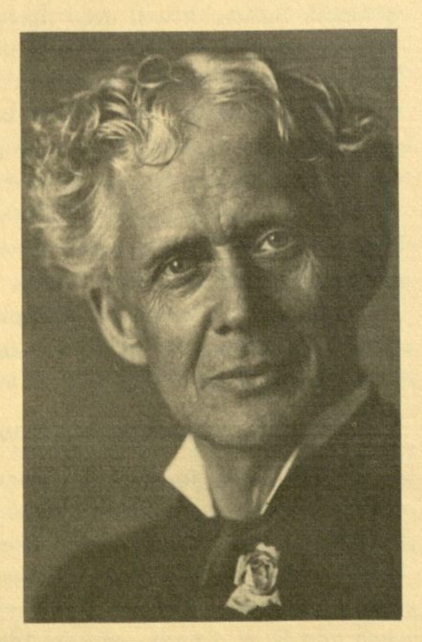
At this juncture in history, C. A. Storke's dynamic son, Thomas More Storke, aged 24, burst upon the Santa Barbara journalistic scene, two years out of Stanford University. He was to dominate local newspaperdom for the next sixty-four years.[21]

Borrowing an unsecured $2,000 from H. J. Finger, a local druggist, young Storke (hereinafter referred to as TMS) bought the plant, subscription list and good will of the run-down **Independent** from LaViece's widow, and began publication of his own paper on January 1, 1901.

TMS got for his $2,000 a false-fronted building (still standing at 26 East Ortega Street); a press "held together with bailing wire;" less than 200 paid subscribers; and little else.[22] At that time the most powerful newspaper in Santa Barbara, the **Morning Press,** was owned by Judge Robert



GEORGE P. TEBBETTS
Owned the Independent



FRANK SANDS
Daily News editor

B. Canfield, who predicted TMS would soon go broke.

Writing was not TMS's long suit but he was a hustling moneymaker who made friends easily with people in high places. To edit the **Independent**, TMS went into partnership with a talented writer, A. S. Petterson, who with C. C. Davis had briefly published an excellent slick-paper pictorial magazine, **El Barbareno**, from an office at Victoria and Mora Villa Streets, now housing a travel agency. The magazine lost money and folded before its first anniversary.

Petterson soon became discouraged with the **Independent** and resigned. TMS had to assume the total mortgage and carry on alone. Thanks to the loyal patronage of such advertisers as Roeder & Ott's Hardware, Diehl's Grocery, Trenwith's Clothing Store and Frink's Drygoods, the struggling **Independent** managed to keep afloat, meet its modest payroll and keep stocked with newsprint and printer's ink. Within his first year, TMS doubled his circulation to 400 subscribers, joined the Associated Press, and upped his advertising rates.

George S. Edwards, president of the old Commercial Bank, had faith in TMS's potential to succeed and once had him on the books for over $100,000 to buy a Linotype machine, rotary press and other essentials.

At century's turn Santa Barbara's economy was booming, aided by the opening in 1902 of the 600-room Potter Hotel on West Beach. TMS shared in the city's prosperity. When banker Edwards moved next door to a new location at State and Canon Perdido Streets, the **Independent** took over the vacated premises at 826 State Street, remaining there until 1924.

T. M. STORKE SELLS THE INDEPENDENT

TMS saw his $2,000 investment appreciate in value annually for ten years. Then a Michigan publisher, Frederick W. Sherman, offered TMS $38,500 for the **Independent**, with a down payment of $18,500 cash and the balance to be paid in four installments of $5,000 each on the first day of February and August in 1911 and 1912.[23]

The offer was too good to refuse. TMS consummated the deal on May 14, 1910, and promised in writing "not to engage in newspaper or job printing business in Santa Barbara, either in person or with any other persons or corporations, for a period of ten years."[24]

TMS, at loose ends, dabbled in the oil business in Kern County for two years. Upon returning to Santa Barbara, he found the new editor was making a "miserable failure" of the **Daily Independent**.

"(Sherman's) payments were not forthcoming," TMS wrote in his life story 46 years later. "I tried to buy back his equity in a friendly settlement, but he refused. A lawsuit followed, which I lost on a technicality."[25]

TMS invoked autobiographical license when he minimized the profound impact of the lawsuit on his future career.

The "technicality" was simply that Sherman said he discovered that



When the Commercial Bank moved out of 826 State Street early in the century, Tom Storke's Independent moved in. The bank's teller's cages were retained for use by the editorial and business departments of the newspaper.

TMS had misrepresented his assets and liabilities by as much as sixty per cent at the time of the sale, although the true figures allegedly were known to TMS at that time.[26]

So Sherman took TMS to court, charging "false and fraudulent" juggling of the books. TMS, pleading inadvertant clerical errors, countersued on the grounds that Sherman's mismanagement was ruining a valuable newspaper property.

Judge G. E. Church weighed the conflicting charges and, on January 7, 1913, ruled in favor of Sherman.[27]

Despite his written agreement not to go back into business in competition with Sherman for a minimum of ten years, less than two months after losing the lawsuit TMS purchased the nearly-defunct **Daily News** from an ailing Frank Sands. He paid $1,500 — less than the **Independent** had cost him in 1900. Within thirty days TMS had recovered most of his old advertising accounts from the **Independent**, and Sherman was washed up in Santa Barbara.

"I felt morally justified in purchasing the old **Daily News**," TMS defended himself in his 1958 memoirs. "I did so in my father's name . . . Technically, I was my father's editor and publisher."[28]

Instead of sueing TMS for breach of contract, Sherman gave up. He jettisoned what was left of the run-down **Independent** to TMS for a token $2,500. TMS merged the two sheets as the **Daily News and Independent**, a masthead that was to endure for the next twenty years.

TMS's father (hereinafter called CAS) began writing acerbic editorials for the paper, signing himself "The Old Man". Thus began a verbal sparring match with the rival **Morning Press** which deteriorated into the most caustic feud in the city's history, each paper being diametrically opposed to the other's policies and viewpoints.

REGINALD FERNALD'S MORNING PRESS

Entering the 1920s the vendetta worsened. The editorial policies of the **Morning Press** theoretically reflected the views of publisher Reginald G. Fernald, the youngest son of Judge Charles Fernald, leader of Santa Barbara's élite society from the 1850s into the 1880s. But "Reggie" was a bachelor playboy, a bon vivant with an alcohol problem. As a result he tended to neglect his professional responsibilities, delegating them to subordinates. This was to lead him to disaster.

Stung by the Old Man's sarcastic diatribes against the **Press**, Fernald's editors began dishing out their own brand of invective. For openers, they labeled CAS an "editorial polecat". This daily jousting titillated staid Santa Barbara and undoubtedly stimulated street sales of both papers, but the vituperation was to skid to shamefully low levels on both sides.

The **Press** declared that CAS was the community's worst enemy, while exempting TMS from this condemnation. They charged that the **Press** had been "falsely and maliciously abased, slandered and villified and held up to public scorn, ridicule and obloquy" by the Old Man. CAS countered by declaring that the **Press** was treating him with "actual hatred, malice and ill-will."[29]

EDITORIAL FEUD REACHES ITS CLIMAX

The calumnious exchange was climaxed by a scurrilous editorial, tacitly approved by Fernald but actually written by sub-editor E. P. Erwin, which appeared in the October 28, 1922 issue of the **Press** under the heading "SKUNK HUNT". It charged that the Old Man "fought practically every proposal for the benefit of the city and belched forth into the faces of the people . . . a fetid breath of political and moral corruption." It further declared that CAS was an "incubus" (evil spirit) harrassing and riding the backs of Santa Barbara's public officials; a "hoary-headed old grouch who was envious of all that is clean and decent."

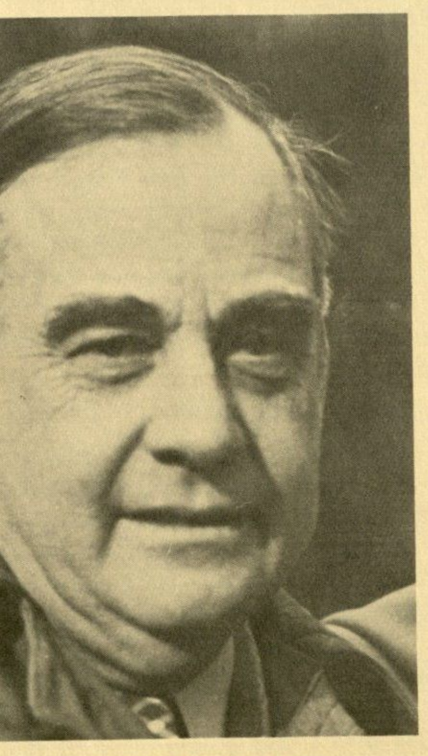
Then the over-zealous Erwin added a fatal paragraph: he wrote that CAS's true character had been spelled out in the transcript of a scandalous

livorce case filed in August, 1891, by Yda, the second of CAS's three wives. ress readers were invited to read for themselves the transcript of that emi-pornographic trial, available to the public in the county clark's rec-rds at the courthouse.[30]

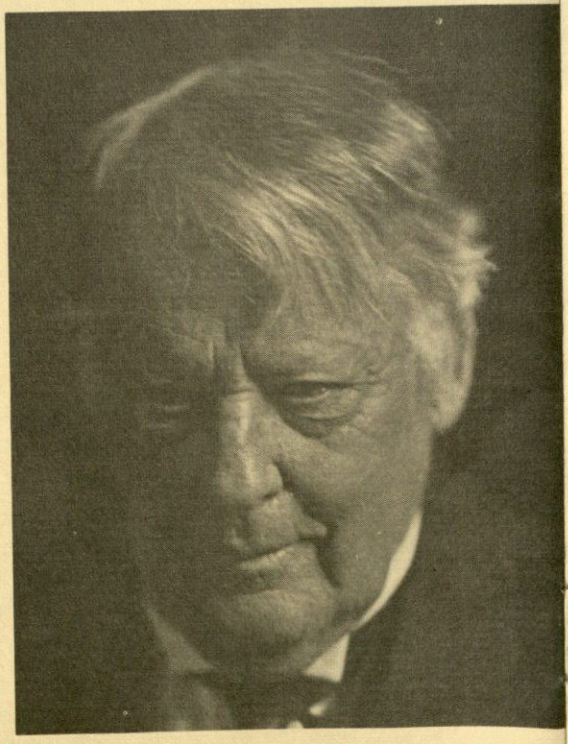
The Old Man reacted furiously to this low blow, decrying the irrele-vant airing of dirty linen which had lain for 21 years in the hamper. Next morning the **Press** jibed "It has been stated before, when one disturbs a skunk, the skunk defends itself in the only way it knows how. The **Morning Press** has disturbed the Storkes and their **News**, and they defend themselves n the only way they know how."

C. A. Storke promptly filed a libel suit in Superior Court against the **Morning Press**, Fernald, and his editors, demanding $150,000 for damage to his good name, and $25,000 in punitive damages.[31]

Judge J. A. Bardin of the Monterey County Superior Court was as-signed to preside over the sensational case of **Storke vs. Fernald.** The pros-ecution's case hinged on the admissibility of the **Press** raking up a 21-year-old divorce action in which the plaintiff, Yda Addis Storke, had accused CAS of sex perversion and other unsavory felonies. (She was later found to be



REGINALD G. FERNALD
Neglected the Press



C. A. "OLD MAN" STORKE
Won his libel suit

insane and died in an asylum.)

Through some incredible oversight, editor Erwin, who had moved to Honolulu before the trial opened in 1924, had neglected to mention that **Storke had been proven innocent of all his wife's scandalous charges!**

The verdict was inevitable: Judge Bardin ruled in favor of plaintiff C. A. Storke. Fernald was ordered to pay damages in the amount of $6,000, which he did on May 9, 1924.[32]

"Losing that libel suit marked the beginning of the end for Fernald and the **Press**," TMS told the writer during a 1957 interview. "Advertisers transferred accounts to the **Daily News**. And in retrospect, it is obvious that the judgement levied by the court left the **Morning Press** in too weak a fiscal condition to weather the depression which was just around the corner."

As Fernald's fortunes declined, TMS and his shrewd young business manager, Bert D. Lane, were making spectacular gains on the **Daily News**. In 1924 they moved from cramped quarters at 826 State Street to a handsome new Hispanic-style building on De la Guerra Plaza.

Less than a year later the catastrophic earthquake of June 29, 1925 hit Santa Barbara, causing $15,000,000 in property damage and taking a toll of 13 lives. Happily the reinforced concrete **Daily News** building survived with only minuscule damage. However, in the hours immediately following the temblor, TMS closed his plant pending inspection by safety engineers.

A small hand press was hauled out onto the plaza lawn, and a single-sheet "Earthquake Extra" was run off as a public service.

STORKE PURCHASES FERNALD'S NEWSPAPER

The great Depression dealt the newspaper business in Santa Barbara, as elsewhere, a crippling blow. Advertising revenue dried up. By the summer of 1932, it became obvious that Reginald Fernald and his newspaper were near bankruptcy.

TMS purchased the **Morning Press** plant at 813½ State Street on September 30, 1932, for a reported $100,000.[33] He announced that each newspaper would continue to be published autonomously. At the time, Fernald's **Press** had an ABC circulation of 7,500, compared to the **News'** 8,500. The combined Sunday circulation was certified to be around 16,000.

Fernald, despite his antipathy for the Old Man, had been a lifelong friend of TMS', and became the latter's co-publisher. Paul Cowles, a staunch Republican and former Associated Press man, was called in to assume the editorship of the GOP-oriented **Morning Press.**

Thus a bland truce descended upon Santa Barbara newspaperdom for the first time since the McGlashan and Tebbetts era. The principal feudists died, C. A. Storke in 1936 at the age of 89, Reggie Fernald in 1946 at the age of 65. (Fernald's stately home at 422 Santa Barbara

Back shop at the Daily News in the 1890s when Frank Sands (second from left) was editor and publisher. This was in the era when type had to be set by hand and pages were made up on "composing stones" (foreground).



Tom Storke's Daily News building at the south end of De la Guerra Plaza as it appeared in the spring of 1924 shortly after its completion. It is still in use.

Street was acquired by the Santa Barbara Historical Society and moved to Castillo and West Montecito Streets, where it serves as a Victorian museum today.)

The **News** and the **Press** carried on as independent entities, with the combined Sunday edition being known as the Santa Barbara **News-Press** starting April 21, 1937. Eventually it proved economically unfeasible to publish separate newspapers, and the News-Press Publishing Company was incorporated following a permanent merger in 1938.[34] The company has enjoyed a city monopoly ever since.

TMS and his **News-Press** were intimately identified with all major county events during the 1940s and 1950s, including acquisition of the airport, the Cachuma reclamation project, the formation of UCSB and all phases of county and city government. In fact, some critics accused TMS of being **too** involved in local politics, hinting that certain mayors and county supervisors were wont to get their "instructions" from the publisher of the **News-Press** before they went to work mornings at City Hall or the County Courthouse.

These allegations were no doubt exaggerated, but no one disputed that T. M. Storke was Santa Barbara's single most influencial private citizen. **Time** Magazine referred to him as a "benevolent dictator."

THE ABDICATION OF CHARLES A. STORKE II

In **California Editor**, TMS said "the Storke family, by long tradition, has been a patriarchal family", with his elder son Charles A. Storke II as the heir apparent.

Charles graduated from Cornell University in 1932 and at age 21 began working his way up the ladder in the **News-Press** organization, obviously being groomed to some day step into his father's shoes.[35] Through the years, TMS always referred to Charles as his successor to carry on the dynasty. But by 1952, when major enlargements were made at the plant, including a carillon tower and pedestrian mall, Charles found himself no closer to the throne than the figurehead title of co-editor and publisher and manager of KTMS, the family radio station dating from 1939. Of real policy-making authority, he had little if any.

TMS turned 83 in 1959 and was still showing no inclination to delegate any control to his son. So Charles, approaching 50, made a now-or-never decision: he left the family newspaper hierarchy to go into business for himself with an advertising agency in Mexico City. In this he was enthusiastically supported by his then wife, the former Barbara Bullard, and their family.

Charles' abdication stung the old autocrat's pride, but TMS rolled with the punch and came back fighting. In 1961 he launched what proved to be his last and greatest crusade — an all-out attack on the radical John Birch Society. Staff reporter Hans Engh supplied the research and writing.



A NEWS-PRESS STAFF MEETING IN 1952

From left around the tables: Claude Snyder, advertising; Thomas (TK) Kleveland, reporter; Don Winner, circulation; Al Albinger, radio KTMS; Victor Manning, mechanical; Bert Lane,* business; T. M. Storke,* editor and publisher; Charles Storke II, assistant; Herbert Orriss,* Ronald Scofield and Stanley Elliott, editors; Francis Tuckweiler, sports; Bertram Willoughby, comptroler; Dick Smith, artist; Floyd Kenney, editor. *—deceased*

The crusade won national attention for TMS. High honors came in rapid succession: the Lauterbach Award from Harvard for "outstanding work in defense of civil liberties"; the Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Writing, from Columbia; the Elijah Lovejoy Fellowship for "courageous journalism" from Colby College; and honorary degrees from the Universities of California and Missouri.[36]

In his 87th year, TMS carried on with plant improvements on a grand scale. He acquired land for employes' parking and future building needs for the next 25 years. He installed a $750,000 six-unit Goss press in a new $500,000 wing which extended to Ortega Street, across from a little Chinese laundry building in which TMS had launched his newspaper career in 1901.

But amid his feverish planning for a future he could never live to see, and despite all the high honors heaped upon him as the dean of California publishers, TMS was a restless and unhappy old man.

He confided to friends a fear that his **News-Press and KTMS** might "fall into the wrong hands", now that none of his family appeared interested in perpetuating his newspaper dynasty in Santa Barbara. TMS especially did not want to risk having the Los Angeles **Times** gain control of the **News-Press** and convert it into a satellite of the Chandler empire.[37]

For many years, TMS had sworn that he would never sell the **News-Press** under any circumstances. But "the best-laid plans o' mice and men gang aft a-gley"'. After deep soul-searching, in late 1963 TMS let it be known that his newspaper and KTMS were available for purchase.

Offers poured in. The highest, reportedly for $15,000,000, came from Lord Thompson, publisher of the **Toronto Star** and other Canadian newspapers. TMS rejected it, as he did an attractive offer from his friend Adlai Stevenson.

"I'll wait indefinitely," he said, "for the right publisher."

He found his buyer in May of 1964, at which time he conveyed his newspaper and radio station to Robert McLean, owner of the prestigious **Philadelphia Bulletin**, for a stock transfer said to have been between $9,250,000 and $11,000,000. TMS retired to a private suite in the **News-Press** tower, with the title of editor and publisher emeritus, drawing an honorarium of $1,000 per week for as long as he lived.

After fifty-one consecutive years, TMS was no longer a publisher. Editors across the country dusted off the cliché "an era has ended".

McLean brought his top echelon executive out from Pennsylvania, Stuart Symington Taylor, to be the autonomous editor and publisher of the Santa Barbara **News-Press.** Taylor retained the existing staff, along with TMS's traditional open shop policy. Paul Veblen, the capable young executive TMS hired from the Minneapolis **Star** and **Tribune** in 1957, continued in the key role of executive editor. When TMS's long-time business manager, Bert D. Lane, died unexpectedly in 1966, his replacement was William F. Sykes.

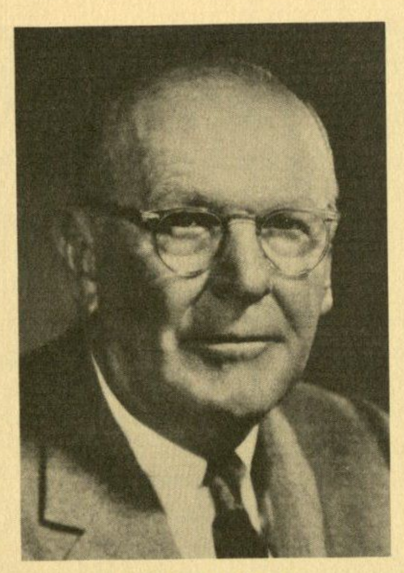
As he turned ninety, T. M. Storke fretted in the lonely vacuum of unwanted retirment. No longer did a stream of VIPs flow through his office seeking advice, favors, or a donation. When the **News-Press** management listened politely to, but did not invariably follow, TMS's suggestions on policy decisions, the old gladiator peevishly insisted that his name be removed from the masthead. It was replaced by the simple line "T. M. Storke, publisher, 1901 to 1964" in six point.

THE PASSING OF THOMAS M. STORKE

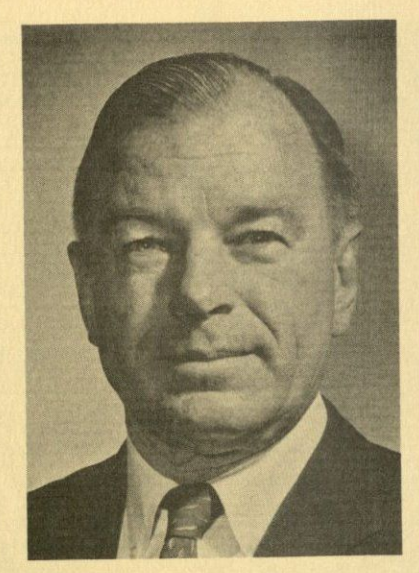
TMS continued to keep regular office hours until a few months before the end. At the last private chat the writer had with him in the inner sanctum, TMS admitted wistfully, "Sometimes I wish I hadn't sold my newspaper quite as soon as I did. But in Bob McLean I know I chose the best possible buyer to carry on the traditions of my newspaper."

. . . Thomas More Storke, full of years and honors, died of a stroke at his home on Tuesday, October 12, 1971, six weeks short of his 95th birthday. He was buried privately two days later beside the "Old Man" in Santa Barbara Cemetery. On Saturday, October 16, Santa Barbarans bade him **adios** at public memorial services at the Old Mission.

TMS's good deeds were affectionately eulogized by an old crony,



ROBERT McLEAN
Owns the News-Press



STUART S. TAYLOR
News-Press publisher

Earl Warren, retired Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, who called him "Mr. Santa Barbara". His successor, Stuart Taylor, likening TMS to William Allen White, called him the last of a vanishing breed of newspaper "thunderers".[38]

The cliché was apt: an era had indeed ended. But another era was beginning.

. . . The Santa Barbara **News-Press** has shown a healthy growth during the nine years that Stuart Taylor's steady progressive hand has been at the helm. Circulation is approaching 50,000. Approximately 260 full-time employes draw higher salaries and enjoy wider fringe benefits, the payroll having increased from $1,750,000 annually under TMS to over $2,800,000 during Taylor's regime.

Politically the **News-Press** is middle of the road, supporting the man rather than the party. But as the only daily newspaper published in Santa Barbara, it cannot escape having an increasingly vital and decisive influence in community affairs.

The man in the street may detect small difference between the **News-Press** of 1973 and the Storke product of 1963, but behind the scenes radical changes are taking place. Space Age technology is phasing out traditional, outmoded equipment. For example, the Linotype machine, backbone of the publishing industry for three quarters of a century, has a capability of 14 lines of type per minute; it is being replaced by ultramodern computerized "cold type" photo-composition equipment capable of 160 lines per minute from automated tapes. One advanced Photon unit does the work of ten Linotype machines, occupies a tiny fraction of the floor

space, and totally eliminates the casting, recycling and storage of heavy type metal at the composition stage of production.

This is not to say that the Santa Barbara **News-Press,** billing itself as "the oldest daily newspaper in Southern California", will ever turn its back on the old, time-tested verities.

Over fifty years ago, Thomas M. Storke drew up a platform to guide his staff. That platform still appears every day on the **News-Press** editorial page:

"1. Keep the news clean and fair. 2. Play no favorites; never mix business and editorial policy. 3. Do not let the news columns reflect editorial comment. 4. Publish the news that is public property without fear or favor of friends or foe. 5. Accept no charity and ask no favors. 6. Give value received for every dollar you take in. 7. Make the paper show a profit if you can, but above profit, keep it clean, fearless and fair."

These seven precepts, while perhaps not always followed to the letter, guide the **News-Press** as it enters its second century.

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